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An Investigation Of The Impact Of Proposed Interdistrict School Choice In New Jersey As Perceived By Chief School Administrators And Principals Across District Factor Groups

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**AN INVESTIGATION OF THE IMPACT OF PROPOSED INTERDISTRICT
SCHOOL CHOICE IN NEW JERSEY AS PERCEIVED BY
CHIEF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS AND PRINCIPALS
ACROSS DISTRICT FACTOR GROUPS**

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**Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Education**

Seton Hall University

1999

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
LIST OF TABLES.....	v
INTRODUCTION.....	1
Background Information.....	1
Statement of the Problem.....	8
Purpose of the Study.....	9
Rationale for Hypotheses.....	10
Research Questions.....	11
District Factor Grouping in New Jersey.....	11
Equity.....	14
Significance of the Study.....	15
Limitations of the Study.....	17
Definition of Terms.....	18
Organization of the Study.....	19
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE.....	20
Arguments.....	23
School Choice: Public Good or Private Good.....	28
Assumptions.....	29
Markets.....	36
Equity.....	38
Research.....	43
Alternative Schools and Choice.....	58
Current State of Choice in Education.....	59
Summary.....	60
METHODOLOGY.....	62
Hypotheses.....	62
District Factor Grouping and Socioeconomic Status.....	63
Sample.....	65
Instrumentation.....	74
Rationale.....	76
Collection of Data.....	78
Statistical Procedures.....	79
Summary.....	80

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA81
Data Analysis81
Analysis of Selected Survey Items	87
Additional Comments and Concerns of Respondents	111
Conclusions	117
SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS. . .	118
Summary of Research	118
Results of Research Questions	120
Conclusions	121
Recommendations	126
Suggestions for Future Research	133
References	136
Appendix A New Jersey Proposed Interdistrict School Choice Perception of Equity Inventory	156
Appendix B Correspondence with Chief School Administrators 	160
Appendix C Correspondence with Principals	163
Appendix D Results of Survey Items	166

LIST OF TABLES

1	New Jersey's District Factor Groupings	12
2	District Factor Groups Assigned to Socioeconomic Status	65
3	School District Data	66
4	Demographic Characteristics of the Sample	83
5	Means and Standard Deviations of the NJPISCPEI	85
6	Univariate ANOVA of NJPISCPEI by District Factor Group and Administrator Status	86
7	Parents Should Have the Right to Choose the School(s) Their Children Will Attend (Item 1)	89
8	I Support Interdistrict School Choice in New Jersey (Item 4)	90
9	Choice Will Result in Inequities in Delivery of Instruction (Item 5)	91
10	School Choice Will Exacerbate Differences Between Rich and Poor Students (Item 6)	93
11	Choice Will Exacerbate Differences Between Choosing and Non-choosing Families (Item 7)	94
12	Choice Will Exacerbate Inequalities Along Racial Lines (Item 8)	96
13	Choice Will Exacerbate Inequalities Among Districts (Item 10)	97
14	Crosstab of the Responses to Item 10 by District Factor Group	98
15	Choice Will Favor Those Already Financially Advantaged (Item 11)	100
16	Disadvantaged Students Benefit as a Result of Choice in NJ (Item 12)	101
17	Interdistrict Choice Will Increase Socioeconomic Segregation of Students (Item 13)	104
18	Choice Will Result in Inequities in Educational Opportunities in NJ (Item 14)	105
19	Interdistrict Choice Will Result in Increased Racial and Ethnic Segregation (Item 15)	107
20	Choice Would Create Competition That Would Help All Schools Improve (Item 18)	108
21	Less Affluent Parents Will Be Disadvantaged by Interdistrict School Choice (Item 19)	110
22	Parents With Less Education Will Be Disadvantaged By Interdistrict Choice (Item 20)	111

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

School choice has been advanced as one of the solutions to our educational woes throughout the most recent wave of educational reform. It has become increasingly popular; recent polls reveal that the great majority of parents favor the concept, and school choice in one form or another currently exists in more than forty-four states nationwide (Likens, 1998).

The basic concept of school choice is that it provides parents, teachers, and students the opportunity to create distinctive institutions that will lead to greater parental commitment, more creative instruction for teachers, and more engaged learning for students (Tyack, 1992). Choice also serves to remove authority and decision making from school systems and place it in the hands of parents under the rubric of "clients' rights," (Frick, 1994). Some proponents of choice, like Lamar Alexander (1993), former U.S. Secretary of Education, state that school choice is not only most beneficial to parents and students alike, but also what is best for our democratic society. Lewis (1995) notes that choice seems to be the "essence of democracy," while others suggest that only the implementation of choice can save our schools (Norquist, 1996).

School choice may open a rich array of educational options to all students, and give less affluent families opportunities that are now available mainly to the privileged (Carnegie Foundation, 1992). Tyack (1992) suggests that it would also provide a method of racial desegregation that is less controversial than

busing, less likely to result in white flight from urban schools, and more likely make schools more socially integrated and equitable. The competition it provides among schools would create an open market in instruction in which parents would choose how to educate their children, and in which competition would weed out the weak as well as reward successful schools (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Gintis, 1995). Choice, notes Allen (1995), affords Americans the best chance of recreating the idyllic common school by returning all children to a level playing field and ensuring that schools are representative of diverse communities. She calls choice a tool to reduce inequalities. Others go as far as to call choice a "panacea" (Chubb & Moe).

Thompson (1995) points out that, historically, America has been faced with the dilemma of providing a quality education to a diverse population, and that schools of choice seem to offer the alternatives necessary to address the needs of this diverse population while still upholding the democratic ideals established within the Constitution of the United States. Choice also represents the possibility to employ instructional modalities that will have a direct and positive impact on the alleviation of academic difficulties encountered in traditional schools (Gibson, 1991). And for many, choice represents more control over educational outcomes and an alternative to the traditional school model that often leads to failure, oppression, and inequity.

In the current scheme of American education, "geography is destiny" for millions of American children (Glenn, 1993). Where they live profoundly affects the kind of education they will receive and what they will learn. Glenn also suggests that our schools are too similar with regards to pedagogy and curriculum, giving rise to a case of "the bland leading the bland." The concept of choice, he notes, seeks to subvert "geography as destiny," and gives all

students, majority and minority alike, proportional access to all schools.

But for every person who sees choice as a panacea or pedagogical nirvana of equity and efficiency, there seems to be an opponent who sees it as the demise of the American educational system (Jones and Ambrose, 1995). Opponents of choice are quick to point out that despite the limited research available, there is little evidence to suggest that choice in and of itself can result in real educational gains (Fuller, 1996). The Carnegie Foundation (1992) argues that choice will widen the gap between the privileged and the disadvantaged, make a mockery of the goal of equality and opportunity for all, and exacerbate inequalities in educational opportunity, especially among minority children. Henig (1994) notes that advocates of choice have underestimated the potential for harm in school choice, particularly with regard to segregation. Petracco (1998) adds that a major concern about choice programs is that they will dilute the public educational system by draining state and local funds from districts, generating additional costs for districts when they lose students to schools of choice, fostering inequities by attracting top students outside the home district, failing to address the needs of at-risk students, and setting the stage for the abandonment rather than renewal of urban schools.

A United States Department of Education (1994) report notes that public school choice itself does little to improve education, while Astin (1992) suggests that the most likely consequence of the implementation of choice is to increase and magnify existing social and economic stratification. Kozol (1992) argues that despite the assumption that choice will provide "equal access" to education across classes, in practice people rarely have equal access. He believes that choice will greatly favor those already advantaged, and that the disadvantaged will be the big losers in the game of choice.

Ambler (1994) suggests that choice will increase social and economic segregation of students because better educated and higher income parents have more of the knowledge, resources, and motivation needed to effectively select a school for their children. Frick (1994) notes that inner city parents lack the resources, knowledge, and assertiveness to make choice work, and suggests that choice is a surreptitious plan that gradually puts the functions of public education into private hands. Bridge and Blackman (1978), suggest that choice will result in inequities in educational opportunity, while Levin (1989) and Petronio (1996) argue that choice will increase social stratification. Corona (1994) calls choice "a ticket toward segregation and further inequity," while Bracey (1994) adds simply that the evidence says choice does not live up to its claims.

School choice, despite its recent notoriety, is not a new concept. It was first suggested in the 18th century by philosophers such as Thomas Paine and John Stuart Mill, who argued that the fairest and most efficient method of funding education is for the government to give parents tuition money and let them spend it at whatever school they choose. "Schools of choice" later became popular in southern states during the 1950's as a ploy to avoid desegregation after the Supreme Court's Brown v. Board of Education decision (Kozol, 1992). More recently, economist Milton Friedman (1962) developed a voucher plan in the early 1960's that proposed that the inefficiencies of public education could be corrected through a competitive, free market system. His plan would provide parents with tuition money and complete freedom of choice in selecting schools for their children. Friedman bases his thinking on the premise that the government is responsible for providing funding for education to promote the common welfare, but that it is not required to administer such. That, he

suggests, is best done by the private sector, with competition for students the impetus for educational improvement.

There are generally considered to be four distinct levels within school choice (Billor, 1995; Frick 1994). The first level is no choice whatsoever--the child is simply obligated to attend his neighborhood school unless, of course, his parents elect to pay the full cost of a private or parochial school. The student is assigned to a specific school determined by his geographic location and attendance zone. In the second level, intradistrict choice, parents have their choice of any public school within their own school district for their child. This often includes magnets and charter schools. Level three graduates to interdistrict choice, in which parents may choose from any public school districtwide, countywide, or statewide, as dictated by law. The fourth and ultimate level of choice, often referred to as "expanded choice," involves a voucher system which allows parents their choice of any school, public, private, or parochial, and provides some or all of the tuition if a parent chooses to send his child to a non-public school. This option can also be broadened to include tax credits and/or deductions.

Proponents of school choice claim that education is a consumer good, and that choice or vouchers will make our schools more effective since parents can decide to take their business elsewhere if they are unhappy with the school their child attends (Gintis, 1995). Vouchers, however, are extremely controversial. Opponents of choice are quick to point out that empowering parents to direct state and federal educational funds to religious schools is a clear violation of the Constitutional prohibition of the establishment of religion in the First Amendment--better known as the Establishment Clause. In 1971, the United States Supreme Court ruled in the case of Lemon v. Kurtzman and set

key guidelines concerning church/state issues. These guidelines became known as the "Lemon Test," a three prong test which states that a statute or policy violates the establishment clause if any one of the following can be proved: (a) its purpose is not secular, (b) its principal effect either advances or inhibits religion, or (c) it fosters an excessive entanglement with religion. This is particularly important when one considers that 85% of all private elementary and secondary schools in the United States are religious in nature (McGee & Kissane, 1994).

On the other side of the coin, however, choice/voucher proponents claim that the separation of church and state guaranteed by the constitution is not violated by vouchers since the "initial recipient" of the funds is the parents and not the religious schools (Billler, 1995). Moreover, proponents point to the "Child Benefit Theory," the concept that the government is ultimately responsible for the education of all children, when claiming that vouchers are legal (Wells & Biegel, 1993). Voucher advocates also point out that the Supreme Court's more recent rulings addressing First Amendment/Church/State issues in education demonstrate the Court's less stringent interpretation of the Establishment Clause (Wells, 1991). The issue of vouchers as a form of school choice is very much alive in New Jersey. The Lincoln Park Board of Education approved vouchers for both public and private/religious schools in February 1997, sparking a storm of controversy (Ayala, 1997). Educational vouchers, despite overwhelming defeats in numerous state legislatures, continue to resurface.

While choice programs have existed throughout the United States in various forms for some time, choice in New Jersey has been somewhat limited. Districts such as East Orange, Franklin, and Montclair, however, successfully maintain intradistrict choice programs.

The State's newly proposed interdistrict school choice program has its origins in the funding formula approved by the state legislature on December 20, 1996--the Comprehensive Educational Improvement and Financing Act of 1996, which states, "Beginning in 1997-98 and thereafter, resident enrollment shall also include those nonresident children who are permitted to enroll in the educational program without payment of tuition as part of a voluntary program of interdistrict public school choice approved by the commissioner," (New Jersey Department of Education, 1996, p. 6). State Commissioner of Education Leo Klagholz announced that New Jersey parents will be able to enroll their children in public schools in other districts under a proposed program that would start in September 1999. According to the New Jersey (NJ) Department of Education, the purpose of the interdistrict choice program is to provide greater choice to parents and students in selecting a school that best meets the needs of the student and thus improves educational opportunities for New Jersey's citizens. It can also improve education and enhance efficiency by allowing a redistribution of students where some districts are overcrowded and others are under-enrolled. The state is hoping the proposal will increase quality by creating healthy competition between districts. The program will start with twenty one schools with one "choice" school per county. Each school will apply to the state to open its doors to students in other districts. All students who apply will be chosen by lottery to avoid the possibility of all the best students leaving a district.

The NJ Education Association suggests that the proposed choice program was approved "because legislators were not especially alert when the administration was quietly easing the choice amendment into the final school funding bill..." (New Jersey Education Association, 1998). Organizations such

as New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA) have lobbied to have the proposed program implementation delayed in order to allow time for further study and statewide hearings on the issue (New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association, 1998). Critics suggest that wealthier districts with better schools which do not receive as much state aid would have no reason to participate. And while the Department of Education asserts that choice will improve educational opportunities, the state's largest teacher's union feels that it will negatively impact school districts.

Statement of the Problem

Today we are witnessing the implementation of school choice as part of reform measures nationwide. New Jersey, by virtue of legislation passed on December 20, 1996, has taken steps to implement interdistrict school choice, making it the latest state to join those with legislation providing for such. While studies assessing the impact of choice are limited, the results of those studies suggest that there is little evidence that choice produces significant educational gains (Archbald, 1996; Ogawa, 1994; Strobert, 1991), while Fuller and Elmore (1996) note that the rising enthusiasm over school choice has far outpaced attempts to assess its concrete effects.

Bracey (1994) notes that there is little or no evidence to suggest that the implementation of school choice has any impact on student outcomes, while Ogawa (1994) argues that any assessment of parental choice programs is "purely speculative." Kozol (1992a) and Jones and Ambrosie (1995) note that there are numerous problems inherent in school choice, such as increased transportation costs, increased bureaucracy, and the dissemination of information. In addition, implementation of choice programs thus far has not led

to diversification among schools as market loyalists predicted (Raywid, 1992). Moreover, local funding of education and disparities in local wealth may lead to increased inequities (Carnegie Foundation, 1992; Fossey, 1994).

These problems lead many to question why choice is advocated as a reform option. It also raises the question of why New Jersey seems to be rushing headlong into choice despite the lack of empirical evidence in its favor. With these questions as a background, this study will attempt to examine the perceptions of chief school administrators and principals regarding the implementation of school choice in the State of New Jersey and its perceived impact on meeting the standards of educational equity.

It is important to note that other constituencies will also be affected by the implementation of school choice in New Jersey, and one may argue that parents, students, and school board members may well have been included in this study. It was decided, however, to limit this study to the perceptions of principals and chief school administrators for a variety of reasons. First, it is proposed that these constituencies are in the best position to determine whether the standards of equity, as defined in this study, are being met. Moreover, since parents have been the subject of numerous previous studies, an administrative perspective is sought here. Finally, chief school administrators and principals are critical to the success of any proposed program, and therefore, their perceptions are deemed extremely important.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of New Jersey's proposed interdistrict school choice program relative to the standards of educational equity as perceived by principals and chief school administrators.

Perceptions are examined across District Factor Groups (DFG) to ascertain whether these groups and socioeconomic status have any bearing on these perceptions.

It is noted that this study could have also included perceptions of equity regarding vouchers. It was decided, however, to limit the study to the more narrow and focused topic of perceptions of equity regarding the implementation of interdistrict school choice as proposed by the State of New Jersey.

Rationale for Hypotheses

Given the controversy which surrounds the choice issue, the need exists to further study the impact of choice programs (Archbald, 1996; Chubb & Moe, 1990; Cookson, 1992). It therefore stands to reason that there is also a need to study New Jersey's proposed interdistrict school choice program and focus on whether school choice in its currently proposed configuration will, in fact, help New Jersey educators provide students with a more effective educational experience and a thorough and efficient education as guaranteed by our state constitution. It also needs to be determined whether this educational paradigm will prove to be equitable, or if chief school administrators and principals will perceive that statewide choice will impact districts differently based on district factor grouping and socioeconomic status.

It is hypothesized that there will be significant differences in the perceptions of chief school administrators and principals across socioeconomic population density differences (DFGs) regarding the issue of equity in education based on whether one is employed in a municipality/school district rated high, medium, or low on the socioeconomic scale.

Research Questions

This study focused on the following questions in order to examine the impact of proposed interdistrict school choice in New Jersey:

1. Are there significant differences in the perceptions of chief school administrators among different District Factor Groupings regarding the equity issues of school choice?
2. Are there significant differences in the perceptions of principals among different District Factor Groupings regarding the equity issues of school choice?
3. Are there significant differences between the perceptions of principals and chief school administrators based on District Factor Grouping regarding the equity issues of school choice?

District Factor Grouping

For the purposes of this study, New Jersey's District Factor Grouping was used to categorize constituencies by socioeconomic status to gain an understanding of how these constituencies' perceptions of equity regarding the implementation of interdistrict school choice are affected by DFG.

District Factor Group (DFG) is an indicator of the socioeconomic status of citizens in each district and has been useful for the comparative reporting of test results from New Jersey's statewide testing programs. The measure was first developed in 1974 using demographic variables from the 1970 United States Census. A revision was made in 1984 to take into account new data from the 1980 Census. The DFG designations were updated again in 1992 using the following demographic variables from the 1990 United States Census:

1. Percent of adult residents who failed to complete high school;
2. Percent of adult residents who attended college;
3. Occupational status of adult household members;
4. Persons per square mile;
5. Median family income;
6. Percent who received unemployment compensation; and
7. Percent of residents below the poverty level.

These variables were combined using a statistical technique called principal components analysis, which resulted in a single measure of socioeconomic status for each district. Districts were then ranked according to their score on this measure and divided into eight groups based on the score interval in which their scores were located. Eight DFG's have been created based on the 1990 United States Census data. They range from A, which represents the lowest socioeconomic districts, to J, representing the highest socioeconomic districts, and are labeled as follows: A, B, CD, DE, FG, GH, I, and J.

While DFG's based on the 1980 United States Census resulted in 10 groups containing approximately equal numbers of districts, the DFG's based on the 1990 Census resulted in eight groups of different sizes. The number of districts in each District Factor Group is now as follows:

Table 1

New Jersey's District Factor Groupings (DFG's)

DFG Rank	Number of Districts	Percent of Total
A	35	6.1%
B	78	13.6%
CD	75	13.0%
DE	100	17.5%
FG	87	15.2%
GH	78	13.6%
I	105	18.3%
J	15	2.6%
Total	Total	100%
8	573	(Rounded)

Note. From New Jersey Department of Education, Division of Financial Services, 1994, Trenton, NJ, "Overview: District Factor Grouping-Socioeconomic Status in N. J. School Districts --1990 Revision Process."

Equity

Odden and Picus (1992) note that many of the fiscal inequalities that plague school finance systems are caused, in large part, by local financing of public schools. Because the property tax base is distributed unevenly across school districts, those with a low per pupil tax base typically raise below-average revenues per-pupil, even with above average tax rates, whereas districts with a high per-pupil property tax base typically raise above average revenues per pupil, even with below average tax rates.

Wise (1969) suggests that equity be defined as equal access to a uniform level of educational services, and since education is a state constitutional responsibility, he argues that the state should not let educational quality vary across local school districts for any reason whatsoever. He states that education should not vary because of the accident of a child's living in a rich or poor school district, or because of the accident of taxpayer willingness to support through local taxation either a high, medium, or low quality education program. The quality of the educational program, he notes, should be decided statewide and provided to all students on an equal basis.

Odden and Picus (1992) describe the principle of equal opportunity as dictating that variables such as property value per pupil should not be related to resource distribution. This principle, often referred to as fiscal neutrality (Coons, Clune, and Sugarman, 1970), requires that resources not vary with local fiscal capacity. Another measure of equity is horizontal equity, or the "equal treatment of equals." Horizontal equity requires that all students receive equal shares of an object, for example, total state and local revenues, instructional expenditures, and instruction in the intended curriculum.

Cohn and Geske (1990) write that equity involves a redistribution of

resources or costs designed to achieve the community's philosophical and ethical standards of fairness, while Jordan (1995) describes equity as what could be considered fair and adequate. The National Association of State Boards of Education (1994) suggests that equity and adequacy are two of the overriding principles of school finance in the 1990s.

It is interesting to note that court cases associated with equity and school finance have found no judicially manageable standard for determining fairness (McGuinness v. Shapiro, 1968). Moreover, the court in Burruss v. Wilkerson (1969), while upholding the concept of equity, determined that it did not necessarily mean equal dollars per pupil.

Odden and Picus (1992) also concede that there may not be a definitive answer to whether any state's school finance system is equitable. Thus, for the purposes of this study, equity shall be defined as it is by Wise (1969), Odden and Picus, Cohn and Geske (1990), and Jordan (1995). Moreover, equity will refer to student equity as described by Berne and Stiefel (1984) and Odden and Picus (1992), who note that resources should be distributed so that inputs (teachers, facilities, and textbooks), processes (curriculum and instruction), and outputs (student achievement) approach what can be considered fair (Jordan) and in keeping with the idea that each child should receive equal educational opportunity regardless of his parents' financial situation.

It is proposed that chief school administrators and principals, by virtue of their advanced degrees and collective years in the field of education, can make a determination of what is fair, adequate, and equitable.

Significance of the Study

School choice is an issue in the State of New Jersey. The limited history of

school choice in other states, however, suggests that choice may not yield the benefits its advocates claim. It has also been suggested that the choice initiative in New Jersey was precipitated by the actions of legislators who may not have fully understood the ramifications of their actions (Fitzgerald, 1998). In many of the states where it is an option for parents, choice grew from humble beginnings to expanded and/or statewide programs. Several states have gone as far as to take what choice and voucher advocates see as the next logical step in the progression of school choice alternatives and have proposed vouchers and an open market system despite the issue of constitutionality.

Chubb and Moe (1990) expound upon the ideas of Milton Friedman when they propose a free market system of education where competition would winnow out the weak and reward successful schools, and where choice would not only benefit those who participate, but would bring academic vitality to all schools. Opponents of choice, however, argue that only additional stratification and inequality will occur. In addition, the Carnegie Foundation (1992) notes that choice should not be implemented in any form until and unless a number of prerequisites have first been met. These prerequisites include autonomy, transportation, information, a way to deal with parents of students who do not receive their first choice, and an end to the disparities that exist between districts. It is also suggested that parents be directly involved in making decisions about the implementation of choice right from the beginning to ensure any degree of success.

This study may determine, based upon the outcome of research questions posed to chief school administrators and principals across DFG's, whether school choice may adversely affect equity and educational quality in our schools, and, ultimately, the viability of the implementation of school choice in

New Jersey. It is assumed that the perceptions of these constituencies are, in fact, accurate based upon the number of years that the participants have logged in the field of education, their educational level, and the fact that these individuals have been duly appointed and charged with the daily operations of schools in the state of New Jersey.

This study will also contribute to the body of research on school choice, as deemed necessary by most authors in the field. Moreover, this study is being conducted at a time when the state's teacher and administrator associations are calling for a postponement of the implementation of choice until further studies can be conducted.

Limitations of the Study

This study was limited to chief school administrators and principals in stratified school districts in the state of New Jersey where interdistrict school choice is in the first phase of implementation. Since chief school administrators and principals are charged with the day to day operations of schools, it seemed critical to determine if they perceive that the implementation of interdistrict school choice will, in fact, create inequities in the state's ability to provide access to education.

While District Factor Grouping is unique to the state of New Jersey, all states have socioeconomic differences and disparities in their ability to generate funds for education. Thus, the results of this study would generalize to any state that has or is considering the implementation of interdistrict school choice.

The study is further limited to perceptions of equity regarding the implementation of interdistrict school choice as proposed by the state of New Jersey, and does not include perceptions of equity concerning vouchers.

Definition of Terms

1. **Charter School**: An autonomous educational entity operating under a contract negotiated between organizers who manage the school and sponsors who oversee the provisions of the charter (Bierlein and Mulholland, 1994).

2. **Chief School Administrator**: An individual selected and duly appointed by the local board of education to serve as chief advisor to the board, executive officer of the school district, and educational leader of the district.

3. **District Factor Group**: An indicator of the socioeconomic status of citizens in a particular school district, found to be useful for the comparative reporting of test results from New Jersey's statewide testing programs. Seven different variables were combined using a statistical technique called principal components analysis to develop a single measure of socioeconomic status for each district.

4. **Equity**: Equal access to a uniform level of educational services (Wise, 1969), with property value per pupil not related to resource distribution (Coons, Clune, & Sugarman, 1970).

5. **Intradistrict School Choice**: A school choice program in which parents have their choice of public schools limited to those within district boundaries.

6. **Interdistrict School Choice**: A school choice program in which parents have their choice of public schools within a predetermined circumscription.

7. **Principal**: A person in a public school district who is appointed by the local board of education to such position and who holds the required New Jersey certification to qualify for said position.

8. **School District**: Any local or regional school district established pursuant to Chapter 8 or Chapter 13 of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

9. School Choice: Any one of a variety of reform measures in which parents have the option of sending their child to the school of their choosing unrestricted by attendance district boundaries.

Organization of the Study

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter I is an Introduction to the research topic of school choice and contains an overview of the arguments and assumptions surrounding school choice. It also contains research questions, the significance of the study, limitations of the study, definition of terms used in the research, and the organization of the study.

Relevant literature and research findings are reviewed and discussed in Chapter II. Chapter III describes the methodology used for the study. In Chapter IV research findings and results are presented. Finally, Chapter V analyzes and summarizes the research findings discussed in Chapter IV and concludes with recommendations based on these findings.

Chapter II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

During the 1980s many Americans became disillusioned with our nation's public school system. The great deal of negative attention cast upon it was exacerbated by the release of such national reports as A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), which suggested that our schools had lost their competitive edge and were in trouble. Urban schools, in particular, were targeted for school reform initiatives. These attempts, for the most part, have failed (McGee & Kissane, 1994). Many have since taken the stance that merely tinkering with a failed system will not do, and that the way to effective reform is through fundamental change of the funding and governance of schools. For many, this change is school choice (Alexander, 1993).

The choice reform movement has become so widespread that more than forty states presently either have choice initiatives or are exploring school choice in one form or another as the answer to the ills facing public education. Polls reveal that the great majority of parents favor the idea of school choice (Allen & Hulse, 1992; Elam, Rose, & Gallup, 1992; Likens, 1998; Martin, 1994).

Proposed as part of former President Bush's America 2000 Program and embraced by President Clinton, choice has emerged, without question, as the single most stirring idea in the current school reform movement (Carnegie Foundation, 1992; Raywid, 1991). The National Governors' Association (1991) has voiced its approval for school choice by noting that schools that compete for

students, teachers, and dollars will, by virtue of their environment, make those changes that allow them to succeed. Proponents of choice, driven by the idea that our nation's public schools are failing and that bold steps are needed to remedy our educational woes, suggest that choice is the solution to high dropout rates, ineffective schools, and monopolistic control of our schools (Norquist, 1996). They feel that it would open a rich array of educational options to all students and give less affluent families opportunities for learning that now are available mainly to the privileged (Carnegie Foundation), as well as unleash market forces that would help all schools improve (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Nathan, 1987).

Tyack (1992) notes that public schools have failed to serve the children most in need despite decades of reform. He and others (Chubb & Moe, 1990) suggest that instead of fixing the old, we would be better served by creating new institutions, replacing our worn and downtrodden neighborhood schools with what former president George Bush termed "break the mold" schools.

But for every person who envisions choice as a panacea or pedagogical nirvana of educational equity and efficiency, there is an opponent who sees it as a prescription for disaster and ruin for the public schools (Jones & Ambrose, 1995). And while the advocates and detractors of school choice debate whether choice will best serve our democratic society or will destroy the public school system, Rassel and Rothstein (1993) argue that there is really only one important question about choice: "Does it promote equality of educational opportunity?" Community School District Four in East Harlem, New York, and the Montclair, New Jersey, School District are routinely offered as proof that school choice can, in fact, help promote educational quality and rejuvenate and revitalize even our most oppressed school districts, but opponents make note of

the Juanita Virgil School in Milwaukee's choice program, bankrupt and shrouded in scandal, as an example of the dangers of unleashing free market forces on the educational community.

There is little agreement on precisely what school choice is (Carnegie Foundation, 1992; Henig, 1994; Nathan, 1987; Strobert, 1991; Tyack, 1992). While the term "school choice" has become a catch-all phrase for any number of reform measures and alternate programs from charter schools to magnets and voucher programs, it is generally agreed that it can be boiled down to several forms, or levels (Biller, 1995; Frick, 1994). In the first level there is no choice; students simply attend their neighborhood school. This is what Glenn (1993) describes as "destiny by geography." The next level of choice is the districtwide model. Under this plan parents and students may choose to select a public school within their home district. Requests to attend said schools are either granted or denied by school officials based on a variety of factors, including availability and the need to achieve racial balance. Examples of cities in the United States with district wide choice include Cambridge, Massachusetts; Montclair, New Jersey; and District 4, East Harlem, New York.

Level three on the school choice hierarchy is interdistrict choice, in which students may attend a public school that lies outside their home district but within their state of residence, provided that space is available and racial balances are not upset. In 1987, Minnesota became the first state to implement statewide choice.

The fourth and ultimate level of school choice, and indeed the most widely debated, includes private school choice. Often referred to as "expanded choice," this plan involves the use of vouchers which permit parents to send their children to any public or private school using public funds. While only the

city of Milwaukee has thus far implemented the use of vouchers and private school choice, other cities such as San Antonio and Alum Rock have, in fact, had voucher or "scholarship" programs financed by private groups and businesses. Voters in Colorado soundly defeated a proposal that would have approved vouchers for public or private schools in 1992 and would have made it the first state to have such a program statewide. California voters also defeated a 1992 bill for vouchers. President Bush proposed choice involving private schools as part of his America 2000 Program, and another Bush initiative, nicknamed the "G.I. Bill for Children," would have given \$1000. vouchers for use at public or private schools to children from low-income families.

Many believe that the implementation of school choice would open up an unlimited and enhanced range of educational opportunities, especially for disadvantaged families (Paulu, 1989). Others believe that the most compelling argument for school choice is that it will give low-income parents greater control of their lives and better opportunities for their children's future.

Arguments

According to advocates, choice is the key ingredient for school improvement (Allen and Hulse, 1992). It would give the disadvantaged equal educational opportunities (Alexander, 1993; DuPont, 1994), and would break the monopoly of the public sector over education (Carnoy, 1995; Kearns & Doyle, 1988). School choice is presented as a "fundamental right" by Randall (1991), and Alexander (1993) notes that our current practice of assigning students to schools based on attendance districts is a repressive one, and one that is against our American ideals.

Others argue that if we give parents a choice they will pick the best, and schools not chosen will improve or get out of education (Lewis, 1995). Choice supporters predict that parents will match their children's talents and interests with program characteristics if schools offer a variety of curricula and families are permitted to choose. Parents will become more involved in their children's education, forcing schools to become more responsive to parent demands and leading to increased student learning (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Meier, 1991).

Many believe that public schools are failing because they are not subject to competitive market forces that would force them to improve or go out of business (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Toch, 1991), and that the application of market processes and competition would improve school standards and foster excellence (Frick, 1994). Chubb and Moe's Politics, Markets, and the Organization of Schools is hailed by choice proponents as the research document to substantiate the idea that our democratically controlled public education system is failing because it entraps schools in a hierarchical, top-heavy bureaucracy that stifles the autonomy and professionalism of educators. They argue that the political institutions that govern schools actively promote and protect this over-bureaucratization. In recommending choice and market mechanisms as the impetus for educational reform, they state, "We think reformers would do well to entertain the notion that choice is a panacea." They add, "Choice has the capacity all by itself to bring about the kind of transformation that, for years, reformers have been seeking to engineer in myriad other ways." And David Kearns, former Deputy U.S. Secretary of Education, notes that the American public is ready for a free market in education with choice and competition (Kearns & Doyle, 1988). Proponents of choice consider the common school to be a mistaken ideal because no single school

can cater to all children (Biller, 1995; Guy, 1992; Nathan, 1992; Thompson, 1995).

While choice is a very popular concept, there are those who do not agree with the market concept in education. Lewis (1995) notes that while choice may seem to be the essence of democracy, school choice is a strategy that does not deal with the problems facing our schools, but runs from them. Others believe that choice is more likely to increase inequity than lessen it (Astin, 1992; Carnoy, 1995; Howe, 1991). Opponents of school choice contend that most parents will not make choices among schools in ways that will improve their children's academic opportunities (Wells, 1993a). Bridge and Blackman (1978) argue that parents with less educational background will experience the most difficulties in evaluating the quality and availability of schooling options. Others suggest that choice will increase social stratification (Astin, 1992; Levin, 1989; Riddle & Stedman, 1990).

While choice at its best may empower parents, stimulate teachers to be more creative, and give students a new sense of attachment to learning, choice is an unrealistic proposal when components deemed to be necessary to the effective implementation of choice programs, such as transportation and adequate sources of information, are not available, (Carnegie Foundation, 1992; Feeney, 1994).

Proponents argue that choice and voucher programs that include private schools are more efficient and less expensive, but opponents note that this is due in part to a lower pay scale among private school teachers (US Department of Education, 1995), and argue that vouchers or choice may actually end up costing more due to increased costs of transportation and information dissemination. In Montclair, New Jersey, transportation costs have increased by

\$1.5 million annually since the implementation of choice throughout the district, and transportation costs in Cambridge, Massachusetts more than doubled upon implementation (Carnegie Foundation, 1992; American Federation of Teachers, 1995).

Bureaucracy would most certainly grow considerably under a program of choice involving private schools due to a need to enforce minimum standards of health, safety, and educational quality at private schools receiving public funds (Astin, 1992; Wells, 1991). Others propose that private and choice schools present more challenging curricula to students. Yet Topolnicki (1994) argues that the best public schools offer a more challenging curriculum than most private schools, and that any private school advantage in test scores is due to their selective admission policies. The basic difference is that private schools can and do select their students and turn away applicants who do not meet their standards (Shanker, 1993). Opponents, however, note that there is no evidence that choice enhances student achievement. Thus, what voucher advocates consider the superiority of private schools can be explained by student background (American Federation of Teachers, 1995). Witte et al. (1994) noted that after four years Milwaukee's pilot program researchers found that voucher students in private schools were not achieving better in math or reading than other low-income students who remained in public schools.

While choice in education has attracted support among politicians, business leaders, and the general public, it has certainly not found enthusiastic support among public school educators. Albert Shanker (1993), president of the American Federation of Teachers, states that school choice advocates view education as a consumer good, but that choice programs that include other than public schools go against the traditions and values that have made our

democracy the envy of the world. He argues that education is a public good that communities provide for all children because they are our future citizens. And a survey by the National Center for Educational Information reveals that 68% of school superintendents and 60% of school principals oppose choice (Jennings, 1989).

Carnoy (1995) suggests that choice promises a lot, but may actually be detrimental to children. After the implementation of choice in Chile in 1980, overall student achievement did not increase, and performance, in fact, declined for low-income students. In Chile, as in Europe, those who took advantage of choice were middle and upper income families. Carnoy argues that the increased competition had a negative effect on teachers and children, and that the choice program contributed to greater inequality in pupil achievement without improving the overall quality of education. Moreover, the government made no effort to improve curriculum, quality of teaching, or management of education after the implementation of choice since this was supposed to happen spontaneously through increased competition among schools vying for students. It did not.

An analysis of school choice plans in Britain, France, and the Netherlands shows that the primary effect of school choice is its natural tendency to increase the educational gap between the the privileged and the underprivileged (Ambler, 1994).

Kozol (1992) notes that there are serious problems inherent in choice, including logistical problems with busing and over subscription make parental choice expensive and constricting. Parents, he notes, don't really have choice if they don't get their second, third, or fourth choice. Urban parents, suggests Frick (1994), may lack the knowledge or resources necessary to effectively select a

school, and Hlebowitsh (1995) argues that policy makers should not overlook the importance of "linking schools to the neighborhood."

Lewis (1995) makes the distinction between problems "in our schools" versus problems "with our schools." By "in our schools" he means that problems such as drug abuse and teenage pregnancy are problems in our society that are brought into our schools, and are not necessarily problems with our schools. He calls our schools community operating tables on which our deeper sicknesses are displayed, and questions why anyone would believe that choice would make the slightest difference in the product our schools turn out. He further notes that choice proponents point to a document entitled, "Student Achievement and the Changing American Family" (Rand, 1994) in which it is stated that SAT scores have dropped significantly since 1970 and that public education is in a free fall. Lewis believes that a far more reliable measurement of student performance is the National Assessment of Educational Progress (Rand) which shows an overall improvement in standardized test scores over the same 20 year period. There are, he notes, educational problems that still need to be corrected, and choice is currently a popular "solution." Others have taken the stance that the best way to improve public education is to strengthen every neighborhood school (Hlebowitsh, 1995).

The question remains: Is school choice a panacea that can empower parents, stimulate teachers and students, and transform schools, or an ill conceived fad that may be detrimental to student progress?

School Choice: Public Good or Private Good?

School choice arguments are often framed in terms of the private benefits of

education or the benefits to individuals. The continuing debate centers around whether the main purpose of education ought to be the best interests of the individual and the family or the best interests of society as a whole. According to some proponents of choice and vouchers, education is a private good, and thus market processes and competition can be applied in order to improve school standards and foster excellence (Frick, 1994). This way of thinking, however, departs sharply from both the American ideal and the vast body of work recognizing that schools also promote the common good. Rockefeller (1992) notes that the emphasis on choice seems premised on the benefits that education confers on individuals, not on society, whereas the genius of American public education is premised on its recognition of schooling's communal and civic purposes. Cremin (1988) writes that American schools tend to portray themselves and be perceived as community institutions, and indeed the very fact of their being educative institutions seems to constitute them as community institutions. Education, according to Tyack (1992), is a common good—the way the next generation is educated ultimately affects everyone, and for that reason Americans want democratic governance of education. Frick fears that the Mid 19th and early 20th century reform philosophies of Horace Mann, John Dewey and James Conant with emphases on equity, heterogeneity, and the common good are being brushed aside in favor of consumerism and self-interest. Even the National PTA (1989) cautions us that the implementation of choice must be based on the collective good of all students, and not on politics or current fads.

Assumptions

There are numerous assumptions generally associated with the subject of

school choice. They are included here for the purpose of providing additional background information and insight into the school choice issue.

1. "Parents should be freed from current practice of assigning children to neighborhood schools; a market driven model would allow them to shop around for an institution that more readily fits their needs." The idea of choice, it seems, is clearly the American way. However, despite the popularity of the idea of choice, parents' satisfaction with their children's schools appears to be quite high. Moreover, 70 percent of the parents surveyed reported that they do not, in fact, wish to send their child to any other school (Carnegie Foundation, 1992).

Fewer than two percent of parents in any state where participation is optional have exercised their right to switch schools (Carnegie Foundation, 1992; Hakim, Seidenstat, & Bowman, 1994; Rubenstein, Hamar, & Adelman, 1992; Strobert, 1991). And in Minnesota, which offers the widest array of choice options, only 1.8% of parents have taken advantage of choice options available to them (Carnegie Foundation; Lewis, 1995). Despite these figures a 1992 poll reveals that 68% of parents believe that they should be able to choose the schools their children attend (Goldberg, 1992). And yet while Americans favor the idea of choice, 80% are not yet ready to let schools compete for students with the understanding that good ones would flourish while weak ones would wither and die; they overwhelmingly support the neighborhood school over the market approach to education (Carnegie Foundation; Hiebowitsh, 1995).

2. "Parents will make wise and discriminating choices for their children." While choice has been heralded as a way to bring excellence to education, research reveals that parents who choose to send their children to other than neighborhood schools do so for a variety of non-academic reasons (Bechtel, 1991; Creedon, 1992; Lewis, 1995; Ogawa, 1994).

Surveys indicate that only about one third of parents who exercised their right to choose in the states of Arizona and Iowa, and just 16% of choosers in Minnesota, chose schools based on their academic quality. Others did so on the basis of proximity to work, day care, etc. (Arizona Department of Education, 1989; Carnegie Foundation, 1992; Rubinstein et al., 1992). A conflicting report by the U.S. Department of Education (1992) notes that 55% of parents chose schools based on "learning climate." It must be noted, however, that "learning climate" is not clearly defined in the report, and may have been used in very broad terms. Moreover, this claim is disputed by school officials who claim that geography and convenience are the overriding motives for most transfers to choice schools (Creedon, 1992; Rubinstein). And while it seems that many parents want choice, there exists no evidence that choice itself will promote academic improvement through competition (Carnoy, 1995; Cookson, 1991; Fuller, 1996; Gainey, 1995; Ogawa, 1994; Wells, 1991; Witte, 1996).

Do parents make good or bad choices? Many point out that the central issue is not whether parents, in fact, make good or bad choices, but whether choice will provide for equity and school improvement. Raywid (1992) states that there is no clear evidence that choice has been a transforming influence for most schools.

Jonathan Kozol (1992) notes that one premise of choice is that it will allow everyone to attend the school they want, but in reality that is not the case. He argues that people can't choose things they've never heard of, and many inner-city parents cannot read well enough to understand the booklets put out by school systems delineating their choices. Moreover, he states that it is generally the rich who get into the best schools. Kozol is extremely critical of choice programs in which districts lose funds for students who leave. Choice, he

argues, will continue to unleash the flight of rich and middle class from the poor, of White from Black, Hispanic, and Asian, and will fragmentize ambition so that individual parents will be forced to claw and scramble for the good of their child and their child only.

3. "Parents will choose schools of higher academic quality, and the competition will force all schools to perform better." The overall quality of all schools will increase as individual schools compete for students and dollars, writes Astin, (1992). But there is little evidence that competition will provide for school improvement or increased student achievement (Ogawa, 1994; Smith, 1995). In fact, studies by Carnoy (1995) and Ambler (1994) suggest negative effects as a result of competition for students.

4. "All families will have several schools from which to choose, and at least one of these schools will offer a quality education suited to their needs and wants." In many rural areas the next closest school may well be beyond easy reach unless transportation is provided (Carnegie Foundation, 1992). A related assumption is that the next nearest school is of equal or better quality than the neighborhood school. This is certainly not always the case. Glenn (1993) decries the lack of diversity in our schools, citing similarities in pedagogy and curriculum, and noting that choice has failed to deliver more diverse educational options. Others argue that transportation will be required if choice programs are to be equitable and successful (Howe, 1991; McGee & Kissane, 1994; Smith, 1995).

A common theme that begins to emerge is that not all families are able to take advantage of the choice options afforded them, and that choice works better for those who are economically and educationally advantaged (Alexander, 1993; Carnoy, 1995; Kozol, 1992; Martinez et al., 1994). A

Minnesota study reveals that families using choice are "far more highly educated" than non-choosers (Rubinstein, Hamar, & Adelman, 1992). A survey of parents who participated in the Milwaukee choice program found that 52% of the mothers and female guardians exercising choice had attended college, while only 40 percent of non-choosers had (Carnegie Foundation, 1992). A study of the Montclair, New Jersey, School District, a district without attendance zones and where parents must exercise choice, indicates that more affluent families (incomes over \$50,000) tend to use more sources of information to make educational choice decisions than did residents with lower levels of income (Strobert, 1991). These studies suggest that choice is of the greatest advantage to those with higher levels of education and income.

5. "The inclusion of private schools in choice programs will stimulate student achievement and school renewal." While the only existing plan of this nature exists in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, standardized scores have shown little or no improvement (Ogawa, 1994; Smith, 1995; Stutz, 1994). Proponents of choice argue that to impose accountability on private schools would force them into the same restrictive environment that has been the demise of public education. Yet in the early years of the Milwaukee plan, the Juanita Virgil School shut down in scandal, further demonstrating the need for accountability. Performance standards by others were marginal (Carnegie Foundation, 1992).

6. "Parents are pleased with choice schools." This is true, note Witte et al. (1993), citing parental satisfaction on almost every measure in the Milwaukee program. In addition, a U.S. Department of Education survey revealed a 95% parent satisfaction rate with their chosen schools. The Carnegie Foundation (1992), however, notes that only small percentages of students take advantage of choice options, and that parents for the most part are also satisfied with their

neighborhood school, or at least not dissatisfied enough to switch.

7. "The competitive nature of school choice will spark improvements and benefit both participating, and indirectly, non-participating students." To date, however, little evidence exists to substantiate the fact that choice has improved academic performance in any of the states with open enrollment (Ogawa, 1994; Smith, 1995; Stutz, 1994). The Carnegie Foundation (1992) does make note of some reported academic gains in selected district-wide programs like Cambridge, Massachusetts, Montclair, New Jersey, and East Harlem, New York, attributed at least in part to choice.

A study by Sosniak and Ethington (1992) weighed the impact of school choice on educational quality. Sixty-six choice schools were paired with "non-choice" schools. The study reported no significant difference between the two groups in content of curriculum, instructional activities, school organization, or the experience and educational level of teachers. While educational gains have been achieved in some districts, the impact of statewide programs is inconclusive, indicating that choice alone may not be sufficient to achieve educational gains in America's schools.

8. "Competition and increased efficiency associated with choice will reduce educational costs." Despite the claims of advocates, this may be a misconception and choice may cost more than originally thought. The U.S. Office of Educational Research and Improvement (1992) reports that there are certain costs for public school choice programs which are specific to them. According to the report these costs include costs for planning, gathering information, outreach, training, and transportation.

9. "Choice programs may tend to widen the gap between rich and poor districts and exacerbate the disparity between the rich and poor." One fact that

is often overlooked in the school choice debate is the fact that the capacity of school districts to compete differs dramatically. Per-pupil expenditures fluctuate greatly from district to district in states where choice has been adopted. For example, per-pupil expenditures in Nebraska vary from a low of \$2,985 in one district to a high of \$10,534 in another, while those in Massachusetts range from 2,817 to \$8,634 (Carnegie Foundation, 1992). In New Jersey, per-pupil expenditures in K-8 school districts for the 1998-1999 school year ranged from \$5,356 in Prospect Park, Passaic County, to \$14,186 in Alpine Borough, Bergen County (New Jersey Department of Education, 1999). It is duly noted that expenditures alone do not account for the quality of education offered by a school district. However, in districts with the lowest levels of spending, textbooks are often outdated, teachers are paid less, and facilities are less adequate. It seems obvious that poorer districts cannot come out on top when a bidding war occurs for students and dollars.

10. "Choice works best when it is arrived at gradually, locally, and voluntarily." In Montclair, Cambridge, and East Harlem, where it is generally agreed that choice programs are working effectively, parents were involved right from the inception of the program (Fliegel, 1993). The Carnegie Foundation (1992) writes that choice is least successful when programs are imposed on districts by legislative mandate or when choice laws have been enacted without thoughtful deliberation or public comment. They argue that when this is the case, school boards are left with little opportunity to anticipate the impact of such legislation, and parents and teachers are left largely in the dark. As a result, they suggest, statewide programs have generally been less successful than intradistrict programs.

Markets

Chubb and Moe (1991) are among those who believe that the natural operations of an unregulated educational market will drive out bad schools and reward good ones. They argue that markets offer an institutional alternative to direct democratic control, and that through market mechanisms schools will become less bureaucratic and more autonomous. Their study is based on two sets of data: the High School and Beyond 1980 Sophomore Cohort First Follow Up and the High School and Beyond Administrator and Teacher Survey, and involves some 400 schools and 20,000 students. Their analysis divides schools into low and high performance schools to determine which student achievement and school characteristics are related to this dichotomized measure of school performance. The authors summarize that direct control of schools through the political process subjects educational authorities to political pressures that lead them to over-bureaucratize schools. This bureaucracy is what makes it difficult for schools to develop the qualities deemed necessary for success.

Their findings suggest that student achievement is influenced by the effectiveness of a school's organization, clarity of goals, strength of leadership, professionalism of teachers, and emphasis on academic programs. And while these are characteristics of all good schools, public or private, they are more readily found in private schools, which are generally not over-bureaucratized. They found public schools to be more bureaucratized than private, and suggest that private schools are more effectively organized. Public schools controlled through politics were not as effective as private schools controlled through market forces. They recommend that schools be funded entirely on the basis of enrollment, which is where market forces come into play (Chubb & Moe, 1991). Educational markets, Chubb and Moe argue, exert pressure on educational

leaders not to bureaucratize, but to satisfy parents and students. This, they suggest, can be accomplished through site based management and autonomy.

Cookson (1991), however, argues that markets are not benign, but are usually indifferent to the needs of the disadvantaged and can be manipulated through fraud and false advertising. He notes that the relationship between supply and demand is influenced by culture and class, and argues that although we gamble in the marketplace in order to profit, we should not do so with our children's education. He points out that a successful company is one that makes profits, but that a successful school imbues in one a love of learning and a respect for others.

One of the fundamental reasons that private schools produce greater student achievement is that they have the right to exclude students they do not want. Moreover, the average socioeconomic status of private school students is significantly higher than that of public school students (Wells, 1995). Chubb and Moe (1991) find that 83% of the study's effective schools have student bodies with an above average socioeconomic status. This would serve as proof that a student's socioeconomic status is a major determinant of his or her success at school.

Chubb and Moe (1991) point out that 38% of the high performing schools in their study are private and only 2% of the low performing were private when proposing that all schools discourage bureaucracy and promote desirable forms of organization through the natural dynamics of competition and choice. They argue that there are two ways for effective schools to emerge. The first is through markets which act on private schools to discourage bureaucracy and to promote desirable forms of organization through the natural dynamics of competition and choice. The second is through circumstances that produce less

bureaucratized public schools.

But Cookson (1991) argues that Chubb and Moe are suggesting that self-interest is superior to collective effort, and adds that there is virtually no evidence that choice and the deregulation of the public school system will lead to better schools or alleviate the shameful condition of millions of American children who are ill-nourished, ill-housed, and ill-educated. He adds that choice policies that ignore educational and social realities are unlikely to succeed and may even prove harmful.

Howe (1991) cautions us that choice systems that allow receiving districts to take the very best students from the urban districts would have the pernicious effect of increasing the concentrations of problematic students in the urban districts, reducing the revenues available to those districts and exacerbating the educational inequalities between urban and suburban schools. He suggests that an equitable choice plan would require receiving districts to fill available slots randomly, establish elaborate information systems, and provide student transportation. Without these components, he notes, any choice plan is fatally flawed.

Equity

Proponents of school choice argue that liberty, or the freedom to choose, will lead to greater equity among students, and that access to a quality education should not be based on the family's ability to live in a more affluent neighborhood. In its Robinson v. Cahill decision in 1973, the New Jersey Supreme Court expressed the image of equity as "the level playing field," or the notion that all children should have an equal chance for success at the starting gate of life, and that schools should provide equitable educational opportunities

to ensure that all have a more or less equal chance in society.

The Court also noted that inner-city schools tend to be more socially deprived, with older buildings and poorer facilities. In its 1990 Abbot v. Burke decision, it suggests that the educational needs of students in poorer districts vastly exceed those of others, especially those from wealthier districts. The Office for Economic Cooperation and Development (1991) notes that as children move out of the urban public schools, funding decreases and the ability of the school to provide a quality education for its remaining students is negatively impacted.

Lutz (1996) points out that there has been very little in the way of substantive evaluative studies of existing school choice programs in the United States, and suggests a need to consider studies conducted in other countries. Her study in the Netherlands found that school choice could have a negative impact on equity, and in fact, tended to heavily concentrate minority students in the larger urban centers. Glenn's (1989) study of school choice in six countries found the Dutch system one of the most highly evolved systems of choice in the world, and thus a reference point for both positive and negative arguments about choice in the United States. The study notes that the effects of school choice on ethnic segregation have become more apparent. Moreover, a 1991 review of Dutch education by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) suggests that freedom to choose is being used by white parents to desert schools with high minority populations, while Karsten (1994) found that in school districts with high percentages of minorities, the percentage of minorities seemed to increase even more rapidly due to White flight from those schools. Ultimately, Dutch education is seeing an increase in segregation on the basis of race and ethnicity due to school choice (Lutz).

Wells' (1995) random samplings of Blacks who did and did not exercise available school choice options again found that parents who exercised choice had relatively more education, fewer children, and worked in higher status jobs. As a result of the different degrees of parental involvement in exercising school choice options, significant equity concerns arise, with the primary concern being that neighborhood schools will become dumping grounds for low achievers while the strongest students, both academically and economically, will take advantage of choice. Moore (1989) calls loosely implemented choice programs a new form of segregation, while Diegmuller (1992) addresses the equity issue by noting that Massachusetts' choice law tends to be of the most benefit to white, middle-income families. Lutz (1996) argues that it is unlikely that choice will improve education, alter the power of teachers, increase the influence of parents, or improve educational equity for the poor.

Martinez et al. (1994) call the general lack of awareness regarding school choice programs a formidable obstacle to participation among many low-income families, and thus an equity issue. Fuller (1996), in noting that choosing families have higher educational expectations for their children than non-choosers, suggests that choice programs lead to greater inequity in the nature of educational opportunities available to working class and impoverished families.

Gintis (1995) writes that many believe that school choice will lead to inequity in the distribution of educational services. He notes that the existing degree of inequity in education is often justified by the argument that local schools should be financed by local taxes, ensuring that inequalities among communities translate into similar inequities among schools. He suggests that this justification would be difficult to support in a system of choice.

Bhagavan (1996) suggests that choice may cause a two-tiered system of wealthy and disadvantaged, thus resulting in educational inequity, while Raywid (1987) fears that choice, if not implemented properly, may inhibit social mobility and be inequitable. Gainey (1995) notes that public school choice must provide equity for all students, especially poor and minority students, and questions whether policy makers will design programs to ensure that poor and minority students are not further disadvantaged. He notes that the concept of equity associated with the ideal in public schools demands equality of results.

Jones and Ambrose (1995) also note that funding inequities are a significant problem inherent in choice, and argue that choice does not yet offer a vehicle for equalizing expenditures or guaranteeing equity in education. Hlebowitsh (1995) writes that while school choice supporters hint at equity and democracy, they have no real commitments to these ideals, and Guy (1992) suggests that the term equity is more applicable to the common school ideal than it is to choice programs.

Smith (1995) addresses the issue of equity with regards to transportation and school choice by noting that districts that do not provide transportation for students leave the less affluent behind, creating a system that works better for the advantaged. Lee (1993) adds that without adequate transportation policies, choice will be neither equitable nor effective. Fossey (1992b) suggests that the same is true with information about choice programs.

Smith (1995) also suggests that the market theory advanced by Chubb and Moe and others is a direct contradiction to the idea of educational equity. Competition for students dictates that one school will be better than another and that some schools will fail. Unfortunately, students who attend these failing schools will receive a less than equal education during the time that the market

works and takes its toll. Hershkoff and Cohen (1992) note that it is difficult even for professionals and informed policy makers to know what quality education looks like, and point out that all parents are not on equal footing to know how to evaluate schools to determine which are better.

Young and Clinchy (1992) suggest that intradistrict choice plans increase educational opportunities for minorities and the disadvantaged and are more equitable than interdistrict plans since they offer minority and low-income students an education previously reserved for suburban white and middle-class youngsters. Smith (1995) cautions us that choice can further stratify the community and have significant effects on educational opportunities available to certain sectors of the population. She adds that market theory advocates know little about the nature of education and schools.

It is suggested that white, better educated, and upper and middle class parents are most likely to make educational choices (Fossey, 1994; Fuller & Elmore, 1996). Thus, non-choosing parents and their children would be left behind in inferior schools when better educated and more affluent families choose to leave. Lutz (1996) notes that racial and ethnic segregation seems to serve as a barrier to equal educational opportunity, again raising the equity issue.

Martin's 1994 study of teachers, parents, and school administrators found that administrators were far more dubious than parents about the positive effects of school choice. Moreover, he notes that parents see choice as an individual, private good, and therefore are more concerned with their own child and have little interest in the equity issue of choice. However, Scott and Hart (1989) caution us that a policy of individual choice in education could lead to a collective loss of common purpose, civic virtue, and fundamental values.

School choice has become an extremely important issue in school reform (Strobert, 1991). However, there is little evidence that school choice does what advocates say it does: revitalize education through competition, improve student outcomes, and increase parent involvement. Rassel and Rothstein (1993) argue that the first and most important question about choice is, "Does it promote equality of educational opportunity?" There is, however, extremely limited empirical research on choice programs (Archbald, 1996; Raywid, 1989; Strobert, 1991). The Carnegie Foundation's (1992) study decries the scarcity of information about how effective school choice programs have been, and alludes to the fact that sweeping legislation has been passed in some states with little planning, and policy decisions made more on faith than fact. The following is an examination of noted school choice studies.

The federal voucher demonstration project conducted in Alum Rock, California, is one of the most noted studies on school choice. It is, however, widely criticized as not being a real voucher program since it did not include private schools and because teachers' and principals' jobs were not at risk if they failed to attract students (Wortman and St. Pierre, 1977), and since parents were given few real "alternatives" (Strobert, 1991). In the study, randomly selected parents were given tuition vouchers to spend at one of the district's elementary or middle "minischools." Bridge and Blackman (1978) found that levels of information regarding the voucher program and parents' school choice options were significantly higher among families that were "socially advantaged." In addition, parents' educational backgrounds proved to be a particularly important factor. Parents with less than a high school education had an average of 3.93 sources of information. Those who held only a high school diploma averaged 4.10 sources, while parents with some college background

averaged 4.39 sources of information about the minischools.

The number of information sources also varied according to race and ethnicity. White parents averaged 4.34 sources and blacks only 3.8; Mexican-American parents who spoke English averaged 4.10 sources, but non-English speakers of the same group averaged only 3.49 sources. This would tend to further exacerbate the disparity between advantaged and disadvantaged parents and lead to further inequity.

A study by Nault and Uchitelle (1982) in which parents had a choice of two elementary schools in a racially diverse midwest town produced similar findings. Twelve of 48 parents interviewed were unaware of their choice option. These 12 tended to be less educated and less affluent than those aware of choice. The authors note that even among those who were aware of their options, those less educated or in a lower income bracket were less likely to have investigated their school choice alternatives. Eighty-three percent of parents in the two highest socioeconomic categories reportedly had visited at least one school before making their choice; only 40% of parents in the lower two categories had visited prospective schools. This study is, of course, limited by the number of families interviewed and by having parents' choices limited to only two schools.

Maddeus's (1990a) study of low to upper-middle income families in Syracuse, New York, yielded similar results. Families in middle-income neighborhoods were more likely to have gathered school choice related information. The author cites time and financial constraints in gathering information as an explanation for the difference. He notes that families more readily invest time and effort when they have necessary resources.

Elmore (1990) also found that parents do, indeed, differ by race and social

class in the amount of information they seek out regarding educational options. His findings suggest that deregulated parental choice and competition would negatively impact those who lack information and market power, and this in turn would result in highly segregated school populations and increased inequities.

Schneider, Schiller, and Coleman's (1996) review of the National Educational Longitudinal Study of 1988 reveals that that students whose parents had low levels of education were least likely to consider choosing a public or private school other than the one to which their child would be assigned on the basis of residence. The authors note that the issue of school choice is a particularly relevant one for urban poor and minority families who, because of a lack of resources and segregated housing, have few opportunities to select a desirable neighborhood and, as a result, must settle for assignment in their neighborhood public schools.

Rassel and Rothstein (1993) question whether families with few economic resources would take advantage of choice if it were more widely offered, and Moore and Davenport (1990) argue that poor and minority families do not have the information and resources, such as transportation, to exercise choice effectively. Others argue that even with increased availability of choice, there would be few good schools among which disadvantaged families could realistically choose (Lee et al., 1994; Wells, 1993b).

A nationwide survey of 1,200 families by Williams et al. (1983) found that consideration of choice increased significantly with parental education and income, and was most likely to be utilized by parents with some college education and those in the higher middle income range. It was also higher among whites (56.25%) and Hispanics (54.1%) than among blacks (33.1%). Nault and Uchitelle (1982) suggest that many low-income parents remain

uninvolved and uninformed about choice options due to feelings of alienation and external locus of control. Bridge and Blackman (1978) note that internal control is positively correlated with income and education, and that increasing parents' school choices with a voucher program was expected to decrease feelings of powerlessness by forcing parents to make active school decisions. Parents would, in turn, seek out information and participate in school affairs, thus leading to improved student outcomes. This corresponds with former President Bush's idea of empowering the poor to spend public dollars on schools of their choice to increase independence and reduce feelings of helplessness. But Bridge found that a decrease in alienation scores among those who were issued vouchers at Alum Rock was accounted for by parents with more than a high school diploma; there was no significant decline in the alienation scores among the least educated.

Bridge and Blackman (1978) questioned parents in the Alum Rock study regarding reasons for their choice of schools. More than 70 percent cited location of the school relative to the home as the most important factor, while Weiler (1984) notes in another study of the Alum Rock project that parents' main desire was to ensure the right of children to attend their neighborhood school. In fact, only one third of parents even mentioned curriculum when discussing their reasons for choice (Bridge and Blackman, 1978). Maddeus (1988) argues that location does matter to many parents, not only on the basis of a school's proximity to the home, but also because parents make tacit assumptions that good neighborhoods will have good schools. Maddeus (1990) also noted that one overriding factor in parental choice was what he termed "moral values" espoused by staff and children. Nault and Uchitelle (1982) report similar findings among suburban parents who sought schools that were more

compatible with their own views on how children should be treated.

Raywid (1985) and Creedon (1992) emphasize the importance of the match between student and instructional style, and Raywid notes that this fit is more significant than a specialized curriculum in determining a family's choice of schools. She adds that evidence shows that white middle class parents tend to choose more child-centered methods of instruction while blue collar parents opt for more teacher-centered and structured instructional methods. This is in keeping with Bridge and Blackman's (1978) findings at Alum Rock, where more educated parents emphasized their children's independence, logical thinking and responsibility, while less educated parents focused on their children's obedience and politeness. Thus, less advantaged children in Alum Rock would most likely wind up in a structured school environment that stressed academic basics, while children of more affluent parents tended to end up in less structured programs in which independence was stressed.

Bridge and Blackman (1978) also found that parents' expectations for their children played a role in their choosing educational alternatives; the more years of education parents expected their children to attain, the more information they gathered about their educational alternatives.

The bottom line question in dealing with educational issues is, "Does choice make a difference in student achievement?" Chubb and Moe (1990) and Alexander (1993) argue that a free market of educational choice will lead to increased levels of student achievement. Capell's (1981) findings at Alum Rock, however, reveal that parental choice had no apparent effect on students' reading achievement, perceptions of themselves and others, or social skills, while Wortman and St. Pierre (1981) reported that there was a loss in reading achievement for students in the six Alum Rock schools that participated in that

program in its first year.

Chubb and Moe (1990) argue that the best way to improve American education is to make all schools autonomous, freeing them from bureaucracy and allowing them to compete in a marketplace. Consumers, parents and students, would choose the schools that best meet their educational needs, while the suppliers, the schools, would compete for their dollars. This central argument of Chubb and Moe is one of several recurring themes advanced by advocates of choice—that choice and/or vouchers will empower poor and minority families to escape inferior schools, and that poor and minority parents are perfectly capable of choosing good schools for their children. That premise, however, is disputed by Cookson (1991) and Wells (1995) who suggest that that argument does not hold up against the historical and empirical evidence that people's decisions are dramatically affected by their own racial and socioeconomic status. Wells joins those who advocate controlled choice plans which involve only the public schools within a single school district so that public money is not funneled to private or religious schools. Alves and Willie (1989) note that under controlled choice, a faltering school would receive additional administrative assistance instead of being left to fend for itself as in a competitive free market system. Moreover, Wells (1995) notes the ease with which minority students could be excluded from the best schools of choice in a more deregulated, laissez-faire choice system. She is among those critical of Chubb and Moe's proposal because it ignores what she argues many other free market advocates choose to ignore—equity issues and the impact of race and class on parents and students.

Another common theme that emerges in the literature is that magnet schools and choice programs exclude all but the highest achieving students or

those with the most involved parents (Allen, 1995; Fuller, 1996). Thus, the students most at risk are left in schools drained of resources as well as the best teachers and motivated classmates (Hlebowitsh, 1995; Wells, 1995). Moore and Davenport (1990) write that loosely structured choice systems promote competition between students for placement in the best schools, rather than competition among schools to improve. Wells discusses the fear prevalent among those who have studied the history of race and education in America that a free market such as the one proposed by Chubb and Moe would not provide sufficient incentives for white parents to enroll children in racially and socioeconomically integrated schools. And while the body of research on how parents and students choose schools is limited, it does provide evidence that deregulated freedom of choice may translate into freedom to segregate (Fuller, 1996; Smith, 1995; Tyack, 1992).

The answer to whether parents and students take advantage of their right to choose is a resounding, "No!" In Arkansas only about four tenths of one percent of the state's public school population attend schools outside their home districts. In Washington 1.2% of the state's pupils take advantage of interdistrict choice under the "Learning by Choice" law. In Colorado the figure is .9% of the enrollment; Idaho, 1.2%; Iowa, 1%; Massachusetts, 1%; and Nebraska, 1.2%. In Minnesota only 1.8% of the total enrollment participate in choice programs (Carnegie Foundation, 1992; Lutz, 1996).

There are numerous explanations being offered for why so few students have crossed district lines when choice appears to be so popular in theory. In School Choice, A Special Report, the Carnegie Foundation (1992) notes that most parents are satisfied with their neighborhood schools, or at least not dissatisfied enough to switch. Others reasons include the constraints of

desegregation plans and the lack of available space. Another is that choice has failed to deliver more diverse educational options; there are, it seems, despite choice programs, few distinctive choices (Glenn, 1993; Raywid, 1985).

In addition, transportation, or the lack of it, makes choice prohibitive to some. States like Iowa, Minnesota, Washington, Nebraska, and Ohio offer help in the way of reimbursement to those who participate in choice programs. Others, however, leave the issue of student transportation up to parents and local school districts.

Who exercises choice? Fossey's (1994) study of 20 school districts in Massachusetts found that the overwhelming majority of school choosers were white families who tend to choose schools in districts with higher levels of parent education, higher levels of student achievement, and higher per-pupil expenditures than their home districts. Witte (1993) also found blacks to be under represented in applications for the choice program in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. However, an investigation by Lee et al. (1994) found that minority and low socioeconomic families were more likely to voice opinions in favor of choice, but interestingly enough, do not necessarily take advantage of available programs.

Parents can influence their children's education in two ways: by having some voice in what goes on within the school, or by choosing the school their child will attend. Parents with more education, with greater experience in affecting the institutions around them, or who live in small districts are probably the parents most able to exercise that voice. Parents least able to exercise their voice in their children's education are those with little education and few economic resources, or those disadvantaged by reason of race or ethnicity (Hirschman, 1970).

Schneider, Schiller, and Coleman (1996) note that the introduction of choice options would be of special benefit to families who by reason of race, education, or income are least able to exercise effective voice in their children's education. But despite the portrayal of this group as apathetic, least interested in their children's education, and thus least likely to exercise choice, the authors note in their analysis of NELS:88 that this is not necessarily the case, and that the disadvantaged do, in fact, exercise choice of schools when it is available. They also do so, according to the study, to a greater degree than whites or families with higher education. This finding challenges the claim that expanded choice would be taken advantage of primarily by whites and highly educated parents.

Schneider, Schiller, and Coleman (1996) note, however, that many of the families that exercise choice may have limited knowledge of educational systems and options, and thus need help in acquiring information to make informed decisions. The amount of assistance school districts provide to parents varies greatly between choice programs, with many placing the burden of gathering information on parents. Schiller (1995) suggests that schools may find it in their best interest to assume the role of information disseminators, and in the process help families make better decisions and increase the probability of attracting students who fit their particular mission, focus, or style. Such parent information centers have been shown to provide disadvantaged families with the data necessary to make better informed choices (Bridge & Blackman, 1978; Glenn, 1993).

Fuller and Elmore (1996) note that rising enthusiasm over school choice has far outpaced careful attempts to assess the concrete effects of choice programs. Their three year study of programs in San Antonio, Texas,

Milwaukee, Wisconsin, and Montgomery County, Maryland, was conducted in conjunction with Harvard University to determine who gains and who loses as a result of choice, whether or not innovative school organizations arise under liberalized market conditions, and whether children learn more when they participate in choice programs.

Their San Antonio study focused on a private scholarship program created by the local business community which allowed more than 2,000 families to choose private schools for their youngsters. Among families that chose schools, only 18% had earnings over \$35,000. Among non-choosers, only 8% exceeded this income level, tending to dispel the notion that low income parents will not actively choose alternative schools. However, parents who did choose were better off and had higher educational expectations for their children than non-choosing parents. This again raises the question of whether choice programs lead to greater inequality in educational opportunities available to disadvantaged families.

Students in San Antonio's choice program do appear to learn at a rate that is slightly higher than those who remain in neighborhood schools, but it should be cautioned that this may have been the result of the selection of higher achieving students for the choice program. It is noted that as selectivity becomes more intense, families that are better off will more likely be served, and the children of the lowest income and least involved parents will be left behind (Fuller, 1996).

While results of achievement tests in choice schools often appear higher, Fuller (1996) notes that the reading scores of students admitted to choice schools are often twice as high as those who do not apply. This "creaming off" of the best students serves to concentrate high-achieving students in choice

schools and leaves behind lower achievers in neighborhood schools. He expresses concern for those students left behind in neighborhood schools, noting that we have no direct evidence about their academic performance. He points out that we do know that the parents of these youngsters are less educated and less involved in their children's schooling. Other research has identified the problem of negative peer influence on classroom performance when low achievers are concentrated in the same classroom (Bryk & Raudenbush, 1992). Fuller also notes that school choice in San Antonio did not lead to an increase in parent involvement.

Martinez et al. (1995), studying San Antonio's choice program, report similar findings. Choosers were found to be more highly educated and much more involved in their children's education both at home and at school. Moreover, private school choosers were found to be more highly educated than public school choosers. Choosers also had higher educational expectations of their children and had fewer children. Martinez suggests that the San Antonio experiment demonstrates that parents who want more for their children believe they get more by choosing an alternative school setting.

Martinez et al. (1995) respond to Rasell and Rothstein's (1993) question about school choice, "Does it promote equality of opportunity?" by noting that choice programs can increase or decrease equality of opportunity depending on program design. They do note, however, that any choice program should pay transportation and information costs, at least for low-income parents, in order to be equitable.

Witte, Baily, and Thorn (1993) conducted a study of the Milwaukee Choice/Voucher Program, the only publicly funded school choice plan that pays all the costs for students attending private schools. The program, which was

initiated in 1989, provides vouchers that allow low-income students (< 175% of the poverty level) in Milwaukee Public Schools to attend non-sectarian private schools. The study revealed choice parents to be more highly educated than non-choosers across all socioeconomic levels, and participants were more likely to be involved in their children's schools. There was not, however, any significant change in student achievement. One significant limitation in the Milwaukee program is that students can only enroll in non-sectarian schools. This is particularly important when one considers that 85 percent of private schools nationally have religious affiliations (Cooper, 1988; Wells & Biegel, 1993).

The results of the Harvard/Fuller study of the Milwaukee choice/voucher program were similar to findings in San Antonio in that those parents already most involved in their children's education were more likely to participate in the choice program. Over 53% of choosing parents had attended college, while only 30% of non-choosers had done so. Participating parents had fewer children and reported more consistent supervision of homework than non-choosers. Interestingly enough, despite high satisfaction with their choice schools, students left them at a rate of 35 percent annually, reflecting the high rate of transience among low-income families.

Fuller (1996) and Witte et al. (1993) note that the Milwaukee program yielded inconsistent achievement results. Students participating in choice programs initially appeared to do somewhat better in reading achievement than non-choosing, low-income students. This increase not only disappeared in the second year of the study, but reading scores of choice students fell below similar non-choosers. By the third year of the evaluation, reading scores showed no difference between choosing and non-choosing students.

Fuller (1996) notes that despite high parental satisfaction in Milwaukee's choice program, schools are often chosen for a variety of factors unrelated to educational effectiveness, and often along color lines. Thus, the ethnic identity of many of the schools may erode progress toward racial integration. This is consistent with the arguments of Lutz (1996) and Wells (1995) who note that choice programs can lead to freedom to segregate.

Fuller (1996) and Martinez et al. (1995) also note the lack of any compelling evidence that entry into a choice school actually results in measurable achievement gains. Moreover, the Harvard study points out that there is a great deal to learn about which features of choice schools lead to achievement gains and which make no difference, and suggests that school level factors help explain learning gains when they do appear. One weakness of the Milwaukee study is that the data are aggregated for all choice students; we need to look at individual schools and classrooms to assess the success of actual school management and classroom practices.

It is noted that of Milwaukee's 18 nonsectarian private schools, only 11 elected to participate in the choice program, either because the \$2,600 voucher didn't cover costs, or because of concerns that the program might entangle them in the same web of regulations that has crippled the bureaucracy-laden public schools (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Witte et al., 1993). In fact, the bureaucratic requirements of the Milwaukee plan seem to be minimally burdensome. Participating schools need meet only one of the following requirements: At least 70% of "choice" students must advance one grade level each year, average attendance must reach at least 90 percent, at least 80% of participating students must demonstrate "significant" academic progress, or at least 70% of the families of choice students must meet the parental involvement criteria set by

the private school (Carnegie Foundation, 1992).

Witte et al. (1993) decry the lack of accountability in Milwaukee's choice program, and suggest that participating schools in choice programs should submit financial audits, demonstrate sound governance, and meet state outcome standards. They also report that the availability of parent information is another weak feature of the Milwaukee plan. Parents had been given little information about either the plan or the quality of the schools. They argue that little if any of the plan was thought out, especially the information dissemination component, and note that over 50% of the parents in the city were unaware of the program. McKay (1992) also found high percentages of parents unaware of any schooling alternatives.

Milwaukee also saw scandal affect its choice program. The Juanita Virgil Academy, which enrolled sixty-three choice students, closed its doors mid-year amidst charges of mismanagement, lack of books, overcrowding, and poor discipline. This episode serves as a reminder that when marketplace ideas in the educational arena fail, students can suffer.

Henig's (1995) study of Montgomery County, Maryland's choice/magnet program revealed that while 72% of all white parents had heard of the term "magnet school" and were aware of their choice options, Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics were aware in percentages decreasing respectively to 39%, again raising equity issues. While transportation is provided to Montgomery County's students, enrollment at the magnet schools came primarily from local families.

It was also determined that both white and African-American parents tended to choose schools based on racial composition and location rather than on concrete indicators of educational quality, adding to concerns about equity. Henig (1995) and Fuller (1996) both note that choice programs do not operate

well in the absence of sufficient information about available options. They recommend that Montgomery County provide such information, since when information is unequally available among affluent and low-income families, school choice exacerbates inequalities in educational opportunity. Fuller adds that unless school organizations offer innovative programs, we should not be surprised when parents do not respond. Moreover, Fuller is among those who argue that statewide choice programs can yield regressive effects. Fossey (1994) has documented the regressive flow of revenues in the State of Massachusetts, and notes that many local school districts have refused to participate in that state's program given its unfair effects.

As a result of their studies, Fuller and Elmore (1996) join those who caution us about the risks of rushing headlong into choice programs, noting that they tend to reward parents who are already more committed to their youngsters' education, and leave behind children who receive the least help and encouragement from their families. Achievement, thus, is likely to rise for those in choice schools and fall for those left behind in neighborhood schools. They argue that no evidence has yet demonstrated that choice itself sparks innovative changes inside the classroom. They further suggest that a democratic government must create incentives that reward parents who work hard to push their children toward success without harming those whose parents are less willing or able to do the same. Moreover, they decry the use of skimming methods that use students' prior achievement or parents' initiative as criteria for admission.

Martinez et al. (1995) note that the results of their study raise fears that school choice would increase existing socioeconomic and academic segregation among schools, while McGee and Kissane (1994) argue that

choice and market competition is not equality and is most likely discriminatory since all students are not provided an equal opportunity to learn.

Alternative Schools

No study of school choice programs would be complete without addressing what are commonly termed "alternative" schools. Included under this umbrella are magnets and charter schools. Magnets are schools that offer specialized programs, and are often used as a voluntary method to achieve racial balance when districts are under court order to desegregate. These schools offer students an option or substitute for their own location based school assignment (Likens, 1998), and feature themes or specialized programs such as performing arts, math/science, foreign languages, or careers of various kinds (Young & Clinchy, 1992). Most target a specific student clientele, and enroll students districtwide.

Charter schools are public schools that operate under a charter or contract negotiated between the organizers who manage the school and the sponsors who oversee the provisions of the contract. They are created and operated by teachers, parents, or other qualified individuals, and are largely free from state and district oversight. Charter provisions address issues such as the school's instructional plan, specific educational outcomes and their measurement, and management and financial issues. A charter school, once approved, is an independent legal entity with the power to hire and fire, award contracts for services, and control its own finances. Funding is based on student enrollment (Bierlein & Mulholland, 1994).

The concept of the charter school was first introduced in the late 1980s, and in 1991 Minnesota became the first state to pass charter school legislation.

Charter schools now operate in more than twenty-five states nationwide, and despite their relatively small numbers, cannot be dismissed as a choice option.

Many charter school organizers are quick to point out that they petitioned for a charter in order to free themselves from bureaucratic rules and regulations, as well as to gain control over decisions related to curriculum and instruction (Dianda & Corwin, 1994). Diamond (1994) suggests that charters provide an alternative to the voucher proposals surfacing in many states, and argues that charters give parents choice without taking away substantial amounts of money from the public schools.

In 1996, Governor Whitman signed into law Assembly Bill 592/Senate Bill 1796 and established charter school law in New Jersey. These schools provide yet another avenue of school choice to parents in the state.

Current State of Choice in Education in New Jersey

Deborah Meier writes that school choice is "the necessary catalyst for the kind of dramatic restructuring that most agree is needed to produce a far better educated citizenry" (1991, p.253). Young and Clinchy (1992) note that public school choice holds the key to improving public education in America, and point to successes in districts such as Lowell, Cambridge, Richmond, and East Harlem. They join those who advocate controlled or intradistrict school choice as holding the most promise for promoting accountability, equity, and diversity.

Intradistrict school choice has been in existence in some New Jersey districts for some time now. Atlantic City, East Orange, Franklin, Montclair, and New Brunswick are among those districts which have implemented choice programs with varying degrees of success. Montclair's choice program, widely considered very successful, dates back to 1976 when that city received state

approval for one of the nation's earliest choice plans aimed at achieving voluntary desegregation (Strobert, 1991). By 1985 the district had done away with all local attendance zones and transformed all of its elementary schools into magnet schools with unique and distinctive curricular themes based on the assumption that no one school is best for all children (Montclair Public Schools, 1997). The "Freedom of Choice" plan, as Montclair's program is called, extends to all ten of the district's schools, each of which features a different program to appeal to different student interests and abilities. Standardized test results indicate that academic performance has improved since the implementation of the intradistrict choice plan (Educational Testing Service, 1990).

Another example of intradistrict school choice success in New Jersey is the "Unique Schools of Choice" model in East Orange. Implemented in 1993, the program has resulted in significant gains in students' standardized test scores, greater parental involvement, and a reduction in negative behavior on the part of students (East Orange School District, 1998). Choice among schools with unique curricular themes is available for students in grades one through eight.

Both Montclair and East Orange, the state's oldest and largest choice districts respectively, fulfill what are commonly considered requisites for an effective choice program by providing program information to parents and transportation to students.

Summary

Parents have the right to exercise school choice in one of two ways: (a) They can decide where to live, or (b) they can choose to send their children to private or parochial schools. Unfortunately, these choice options are beyond the economic capabilities of many parents.

Choice proponents point out that a market based or choice system is consistent with the value system of our nation; we wouldn't tolerate for a moment the government assigning us our jobs or colleges, and neither should we tolerate government assignment to elementary or secondary schools. They state that choice is the agent of change needed to improve our schools. It gives people a sense of shared ownership in what they have chosen, and gives all families access to the best schools (DuPont, 1994). Some (Chubb & Moe, 1990) insist that choice is a necessary change, and note that the problems in our educational system haven't been solved because the existing system itself is the problem. Choice allows schools to diversify and concentrate their resources and energy in a limited number of areas, thus maximizing their effectiveness. It also creates different kinds of schools to serve our diverse population and to accommodate the range of parent and professional beliefs about what education should be (Young & Clinchy, 1992). Simply put, school choice is the American way. Across the nation, choice has become our most stirring educational reform.

There are, however, many who dispute these claims, noting that there is no empirical evidence that choice improves student outcomes (Fuller, 1996; Gainey, 1995; Ogawa, 1994). Others suggest that choice will work better for those economically and educationally advantaged (Carnoy, 1995; Kozol, 1992; Martinez et al., 1994), and will increase social stratification and inequities (Astin, 1992; Levin, 1989; Riddle & Stedman, 1990).

The proposed implementation of interdistrict school choice in New Jersey necessitates that all factors be explored.

Chapter III

METHODOLOGY

Archbald (1996) and Fuller and Elmore (1996) are among those who suggest that rising enthusiasm over school choice has far outpaced attempts to assess its concrete effects. Others discuss the need to study school choice programs and their impact on equity, student achievement, and educational quality (Archbald; Carnegie Foundation, 1992). The need also exists to study interdistrict school choice as proposed in the State of New Jersey to assess its potential impact. While past research has often focused on the characteristics of choosing families when studying or alluding to inequities inherent in school choice (Bridge & Blackman, 1978; Carnoy, 1995; Frick, 1994; Martinez, Thomas, & Kemerer, 1994), this study focuses on administrators' perceptions of equity regarding school choice.

Hypotheses

The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of proposed interdistrict school choice in New Jersey as perceived by chief school administrators and principals across District Factor Groups (DFG's), a measure of socioeconomic status and population density. In order to make this determination, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

1. There are significant differences in the perceptions of chief school administrators among different District Factor Groupings regarding the equity

issues of school choice.

2. There are significant differences in the perceptions of principals among different District Factor Groupings regarding the equity issues of school choice.

3. There are significant differences between the perceptions of chief school administrators and principals based on District Factor Grouping regarding the equity issues of school choice.

There is one independent variable and one dependent variable in this study. The independent variable is administrative status: (a) chief school administrator or (b) principal. It is qualified by stratified district factor grouping, or socioeconomic status. The dependent variable is the perception of equity based on the New Jersey Proposed Interdistrict School Choice Perception of Equity Inventory (NJISCP EI). The dependent variable is measured on an ordinal Likert scale with perceptions of school choice equity distributed on an underlying continuum. Rudestam and Newton (1992) note that statistical methods are especially useful for looking at relationships and patterns and expressing those patterns, while Kerlinger (1979) points out that statistics help to make decisions to accept or reject hypothesized relations between phenomena and aid in making reliable inferences from empirical observations. Leedy (1997) suggests that quantitative studies are conducted when a researcher wishes to make deductions and test the implications of preformed hypotheses.

District Factor Grouping and Socioeconomic Status

District Factor Group is an indicator of the socioeconomic status of the citizens in each school district throughout the state of New Jersey, and has

been found to be useful for the comparative reporting of test results from the state's standardized testing programs. A single measure of socioeconomic status is calculated for each district through the use of a statistical technique called principal components analysis, which combines the following variables: (a) percent of adult residents who failed to complete high school, (b) percent of adult residents who attended college, (c) occupational status of household members, (d) population density, (e) median family income, (f) percent of those in the work force who receive unemployment compensation, and (g) percent of residents below the poverty level. New Jersey currently has eight district factor group classifications: A, B, CD, DE, FG, GH, I, and J, with A the lowest and J the highest.

Confidence is high that District Factor Grouping is an effective indicator of socioeconomic status in New Jersey. The measure has been in existence since 1974 when it was first developed using data from the 1970 United States Census. It was revised in 1984 to more accurately reflect demographic changes noted in the 1980 census. District Factor Group designations were most recently modified in 1992 using data from the 1990 census. For the purpose of this study, District Factor Groups were stratified into three subgroups corresponding to low, medium, and high socioeconomic status. The three subgroups are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

District Factor Groups Assigned to Socioeconomic Status Levels

<u>DFG</u>	<u>Total No. of Districts</u>	<u>No. Sampled</u>	<u>Percentage</u>	<u>SES</u>
A, B, & CD	188 Districts	80	32.8%	Low
DE, & FG,	187 Districts	80	32.6%	Medium
GH, I, & J	198 Districts	80	34%	High

Socioeconomic status has been shown to affect students' academic performance. Chubb and Moe (1990) found that 83% of the schools designated "effective schools" in their study had student bodies with an above average socioeconomic status. This would serve as evidence that socioeconomic status is a major determinant of one's success in school.

Sample

The participants in this study were chief school administrators and principals from selected stratified school districts in the State of New Jersey. These districts are representative of the northern, central, and southern regions of the state, and include all District Factor Groupings. The districts in this study are also representative of a variety of school configurations, and include a mix of urban, suburban, and rural school districts of various size enrollments from all twenty-one counties. A total of 240 districts were selected for this study, with 80 chosen from each stratified grouping of socioeconomic status: low, medium, and high. District data is presented in Table 3.

Table 3

School District Data

District	County	DFG	SES Sub-Group
Asbury Park	Monmouth	A	Low
Buena Regional	Atlantic	A	
Commercial Twp.	Cumberland	A	
Downe Twp.	Cumberland	A	
East Orange	Essex	A	
Elizabeth	Union	A	
Harrison	Hudson	A	
Irvington	Essex	A	
Jersey City	Hudson	A	
Lawrence Twp	Cumberland	A	
Newark	Essex	A*	
Passaic City	Passaic	A	
Paulsboro	Gloucester	A	
Trenton	Mercer	A*	
Union City	Hudson	A	
Wildwood City	Cape May	A	
Bayonne	Hudson	B	
Bradley Beach	Monmouth	B	
Burlington City	Burlington	B	
Carteret Borough	Middlesex	B	
Clayton	Gloucester	B	
Egg Harbor City	Atlantic	B	
Fairview	Bergen	B	
Garfield	Bergen	B	

Glassboro	Gloucester	B
Guttenberg	Hudson	B
Hammonton Town	Atlantic	B
Lakehurst	Ocean	B
Lawnside	Camden	B
Lodi	Bergen	B
Lower Cape May Reg.	Cape May	B
Magnolia	Camden	B
Millville	Cumberland	B
Mullica Twp.	Atlantic	B
Penns Grove-Carney's Pt.	Salem	B
Phillipsburg	Warren	B
Prospect Park	Passaic	B
Quinton Twp.	Salem	B
Riverside Twp.	Burlington	B
Runnemedede Borough	Camden	B
South River	Middlesex	B
Upper Deerfield Twp.	Cumberland	B
Vineland City	Cumberland	B
Weehawken	Hudson	B
Winfield Twp.	Union	B
Woodlynnne Borough	Camden	B
Alpha	Warren	CD
Belleville	Essex	CD
Bound Brook Borough	Somerset	CD
Deptford Township	Gloucester	CD
Dover Town	Morris	CD
E. Rutherford	Bergen	CD
Franklin Borough	Sussex	CD
Freehold Borough	Monmouth	CD
Hillside	Union	CD
Lacey Township	Ocean	CD

Lindenwold Boro	Camden	CD
Lyndhurst Township	Bergen	CD
Manville Borough	Somerset	CD
Maple Shade Twp.	Burlington	CD
Monroe Township	Gloucester	CD
Moonachie Boro	Bergen	CD
Neptune Township	Monmouth	CD
Newton	Sussex	CD
Oxford Township	Warren	CD
Palisades Park	Bergen	CD
Passaic Co. Manchester	Passaic	CD
Pemberton Twp.	Burlington	CD
Pittsgrove	Salem	CD
Rahway	Union	CD
Roselle Borough	Union	CD
Sea Isle City	Cape May	CD
Somers Point	Atlantic	CD
South Amboy	Middlesex	CD
Southern Regional	Ocean	CD
Southampton Twp.	Burlington	CD
Sussex-Wantage Reg.	Sussex	CD
Ventnor City	Atlantic	CD
Wanaque	Passaic	CD
White Twp.	Warren	CD

Absecon City	Atlantic	DE	Middle
Alloway Twp.	Salem	DE	
Belvidere	Warren	DE	
Berlin Borough	Camden	DE	
Bloomfield Twp.	Essex	DE	
Carlstadt	Bergen	DE	
Clifton	Passaic	DE	
Collingswood Borough	Camden	DE	

Dennis Twp.	Cape May	DE
Elsinboro Twp.	Salem	DE
Frenchtown Borough	Hunterdon	DE
Galloway Twp.	Atlantic	DE
Greenwich Twp.	Gloucester	DE
Hackettstown	Warren	DE
Hamburg Borough	Sussex	DE
Hasbrouck Heights	Bergen	DE
Hawthorne	Passaic	DE
Hazlet Township	Monmouth	DE
Henry Hudson Reg.	Monmouth	DE
Jackson Twp.	Ocean	DE
Jamesburg	Middlesex	DE
Lavalette Borough	Ocean	DE
Merchantville	Camden	DE
Montague	Sussex	DE
Netcong	Morris	DE
North Haledon	Passaic	DE
Nutley	Essex	DE
Oaklyn Borough	Camden	DE
Ocean City	Cape May	DE
Palmyra Borough	Burlington	DE
Pitman	Gloucester	DE
Pohatcong	Warren	DE
Point Pleasant Borough	Ocean	DE
Rochelle Park	Bergen	DE
Sayreville	Middlesex	DE
Seaside Park Borough	Ocean	DE
Somerville Borough	Somerset	DE
Stow Creek Twp.	Cumberland	DE
Union Twp.	Union	DE
Upper Pittsgrove Twp.	Salem	DE
Warren Hills Regional	Warren	DE

West Paterson	Passaic	DE
Woodbridge Twp.	Middlesex	DE*
Bloomington	Passaic	FG
Clark Twp.	Union	FG
Delran Twp.	Burlington	FG
Eastampton Twp.	Burlington	FG
Eatontown	Monmouth	FG
Edgewater Borough	Bergen	FG
Edison Twp.	Middlesex	FG
Ewing Twp.	Mercer	FG
Frelinghuysen Twp.	Warren	FG
Great Meadows Reg.	Warren	FG
Haddon Twp.	Camden	FG
Hamilton Twp.	Mercer	FG
Holland Twp.	Hunterdon	FG
Hopatcong Borough	Sussex	FG
Howell Twp.	Monmouth	FG
Little Falls Twp.	Passaic	FG
Long Beach Island	Ocean	FG
Manasquan	Monmouth	FG
Margate City	Atlantic	FG
Matawan-Aberdeen Reg.	Monmouth	FG
Midland Park Borough	Bergen	FG
Milltown	Middlesex	FG
New Milford	Bergen	FG
Northfield City	Atlantic	FG
North Plainfield Borough	Somerset	FG
Ogdensburg	Sussex	FG
Old Bridge Twp.	Middlesex	FG*
Piscataway Twp.	Middlesex	FG
Port Republic	Atlantic	FG
Rockaway Borough	Morris	FG

Rutherford	Bergen	FG	
Secaucus	Hudson	FG	
Spring Lake Hts Boro	Monmouth	FG	
Vernon Twp.	Sussex	FG	
West Milford	Passaic	FG	
Wharton Borough	Morris	FG	
Woodstown-Pilesgrove	Salem	FG	
Allamuchy Twp.	Warren	GH	High
Brielle Borough	Monmouth	GH	
Cedar Grove	Essex	GH	
Cranford Twp.	Union	GH	
Delaware Twp.	Hunterdon	GH	
East Windsor Reg.	Mercer	GH*	
Flemington-Raritan Reg.	Hunterdon	GH	
Franklin Twp.	Somerset	GH	
Freehold Twp.	Monmouth	GH	
Haddon Heights	Camden	GH	
High Bridge Borough	Hunterdon	GH	
Highland Park	Middlesex	GH	
Lebanon Twp.	Hunterdon	GH	
Lincoln Park Borough	Morris	GH	
Linwood City	Atlantic	GH	
Metuchen	Middlesex	GH	
North Brunswick Twp.	Middlesex	GH	
Northvale	Bergen	GH	
Oceanport Borough	Monmouth	GH	
Pequannock Twp.	Morris	GH	
Ringwood	Passaic	GH	
Shamong Twp.	Burlington	GH	
Springfield Twp.	Union	GH	
Stone Harbor	Cape May	GH	
Tabernacle Twp.	Burlington	GH	

Tinton Falls	Monmouth	GH
Washington Township	Gloucester	GH
West Long Branch	Monmouth	GH
West Orange	Essex	GH
Westwood Regional	Bergen	GH
Bayhead	Ocean	
Berkeley Heights	Union	
Bethlehem Twp.	Hunterdon	
Branchburg Twp.	Somerset	
Chester Twp.	Morris	
Colts Neck Twp.	Monmouth	
Cranbury Twp.	Middlesex	
Cresskill	Bergen	
E. Amwell Twp.	Hunterdon	
E. Brunswick	Middlesex	
Florham Park	Morris	
Glen Ridge	Essex	
Green Twp.	Sussex	
Haddonfield Borough	Camden	
Haworth	Bergen	
Hillsborough Twp.	Somerset	
Holmdel	Monmouth	
Hopewell Valley Reg.	Mercer	
Lawrence Twp.	Mercer	
Leonia	Bergen	
Livingston	Essex	
Marlboro Twp.	Monmouth	
Medford Lakes Borough	Burlington	
Monmouth Beach	Monmouth	
Montvale	Bergen	
Montville	Morris	
Morris Plains	Morris	

Mountainside	Union	I
New Providence	Union	I
Oakland	Bergen	I
Princeton Regional	Mercer	I
Randolph	Morris	I
River Vale	Bergen	I
Rockaway Twp.	Morris	I
Scotch Plains-Farwood	Union	I*
Sparta Twp.	Sussex	I
Verona	Essex	I
Voorhees Twp.	Camden	I
Watchung Borough	Somerset	I
Wenonah Borough	Gloucester	I
West Essex Reg.	Essex	I
Alpine	Bergen	J
Bedminster Twp.	Somerset	J
Essex Fells	Essex	J
Franklin Lakes	Bergen	J
Millburn Twp.	Essex	J
Montgomery Twp.	Somerset	J
Mountain Lakes	Morris	J
Tewksbury Twp.	Hunterdon	J
Woodcliff Lake	Bergen	J

Note. * Indicates district selected for oversampling of principals.

A variety of concerns led to the decision to oversample randomly selected larger school districts (3501+ students) from among the stratified sample (New Jersey Department of Education, 1999). These concerns include the having the state's largest districts represented in this study by the perceptions of a single principal. In addition, the oversampling of principals was necessary in order to match the number of superintendents polled, since thirty-seven districts from the sample are one school districts in which the chief school administrator also acts as the district's/school's principal, and, thus, from which no principal was selected. Since the primary role of these individuals is that of chief school administrator, for the purposes of this study, they were included in that category. Moreover, this oversampling would provide a greater likelihood of attaining a sufficient number of completed surveys to conduct this study.

Districts randomly selected for oversampling were Newark and Trenton (Low Socioeconomic Status); Old Bridge Township and Woodbridge Township (Middle Socioeconomic Status); and East Windsor Regional and Scotch Plains-Farwood Regional (High Socioeconomic Status).

Instrumentation

The instrument used for this study, the New Jersey Proposed Interdistrict School Choice Perception of Equity Inventory (NJPISCPEI), was specifically designed for this study by the researcher in order to provide a measure of the perceptions and attitudes of chief school administrators and principals towards school choice. Twenty indicators were developed as the basis for the instrument, a Likert type scale with responses ranging from one to five, with one representing strongly disagree and five representing a response of strongly agree. Responses of two, three, and four indicate a more neutral position. The

NJPISCPEI is presented in Appendix A.

The instrument assesses the perceptions of equity in school choice in the following areas: (a) Support of the general concept of school choice, (b) support of interdistrict school choice, (c) equity in the delivery of instruction, (d) impact on individual school districts, (e) benefits to students, (f) benefits to families based on race and socioeconomic status, and (g) the potential for racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic segregation. The survey also includes a demographic data questionnaire for the purpose of determining the age, sex, and administrative experience of the participants. The demographic questionnaire further questioned the respondent's administrative level (elementary, middle, or secondary), and whether district enrollment is rising or falling.

Some survey questions were developed as a direct result of previous research. Others were culled from questionnaires used in previous studies and revised for use in this study. For example, "Parents should have the right to choose the schools their children will attend," was used almost verbatim as it appeared in Margaret Tannenbaum's (1990) limited survey of New Jersey parents, teachers, administrators, board members, and students. Studies by Graham and Ruhl on the attitudes of superintendents in Arkansas, Iowa, and Minnesota (1990) and in Arkansas, Iowa, Minnesota, and Nebraska (1993) yielded additional survey questions. These questions dealt with school choice leading to increased student achievement, increased competition among districts leading to improved school quality, and the possibility of choice leading to increased racial and socioeconomic segregation.

Further questions were gathered from a 1992 survey of urban elementary school teachers by Lawrence and Ogletree (1992), and a survey of administrators, teachers, and parents by Martin (1994) led to the development

of other questions. These researchers also note that a review of the literature led to the development of their survey questions. Moreover, the literature review led to the conclusion that these questions are, in fact, the most relevant to this study.

It should be noted that, for the purposes of this study, perceptions of equity on the part of chief school administrators and principals were based on student equity. Student equity has been defined by Berne and Stiefel (1984) and Odden and Picus (1992) as existing when resources are distributed so that inputs (teachers, facilities, and textbooks), processes (curriculum and instruction), and outputs (student achievement) approach what can be considered fair and in keeping with the concept that each and every child should receive equal educational opportunity regardless of his parents' financial situation.

It is assumed that the perceptions of chief school administrators and principals are accurate based on their advanced degrees and number of years in educational administration. Moreover, it is noted that chief school administrators and principals fill roles as not only school administrators, but also as parents, citizens, and taxpayers. For the purposes of this study, it was asked that their responses be limited to their professional capacity.

Rationale

The need for this study and a research instrument like the New Jersey Proposed Interdistrict School Choice Perception of Equity Inventory is evident. First, both the New Jersey Education Association and the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association have suggested that the implementation of the

proposed interdistrict school choice plan be delayed until its impact can be assessed (NJEA, 1998; NJPSA, 1998). Second, research indicates that school choice may have an adverse impact on educational equity (Fuller, 1996; Gintis, 1995; Lutz, 1996; Martinez, 1994; Raywid, 1987; Wells, 1995). Third, it is not known whether chief school administrators and principals, those ultimately charged with the day to day operations of our public schools, will support such a program. Jennings (1989) notes that a survey by the National Center for Educational Information found that 68% of chief school administrators and 60% of building principals oppose school choice, while Tannenbaum's (1990) New Jersey survey found that school administrators were more likely (66%) to oppose choice than any other constituency. Graham and Ruhl (1993) note that while 51.6% of the superintendents in their survey favored legislation permitting school choice outside their residing district, 52.2% rejected one of the major tenets offered by supporters of choice: that choice will create competition that will improve schools. Martin's (1994) survey of administrators in Tennessee found only 12% with favorable attitudes toward choice. A study by the Minnesota House of Representatives (1991) suggests that 16% of superintendents felt that choice had actually hurt their districts. This survey indicates that class sizes had increased both in districts gaining and losing students, and that the departure of students from districts resulted in a loss of revenue, a lack of stability for planning, and reduced programs for remaining students.

This leads to questions about the prudence of initiating and implementing a choice program that is clearly without the support of the state's teacher and principal-supervisor associations, and was passed by legislators who may have been less than cognizant of the ramifications of their actions (NJEA, 1998).

Collection of Data

Stratified selection was used in this study. First, school districts were numbered within each of the three stratified socioeconomic subgroups of District Factor Groups. All 573 districts in the State of New Jersey were considered for the study; none were excluded. Next, districts were selected through the use of a three digit random numbers table (Kerlinger, 1979) until the desired number of districts from each sub-group was reached. Rudenstam and Newton (1992) note that random selection is a useful method for obtaining representative samples. Consistent with Table 2, an equal percentage of districts from each of the three stratified sub-groups were selected.

Each selected school district was contacted to ascertain the name of the chief school administrator and principal(s). In cases where districts employed more than one principal, the random selection process was again implemented. A list of principals from each district was compiled and numbered, and random numbers tables used to select the individual to be used for the study.

Each participant received a packet which contained a cover letter explaining the purpose of study and the need to survey districts across different district factor groups and socioeconomic levels. The cover letter presented an overview and outlined the parameters of the study, invited the reader's voluntary and anonymous participation, and offered an explanation of the NJPISCEI as an instrument to measure perceptions of equity related to school choice. Each packet included the New Jersey Proposed Interdistrict School Choice Perception of Equity Inventory and Demographic Survey, and contained a stamped, pre-addressed envelope in which the survey could be returned. Differentiation between the surveys of chief school administrators and principals

was achieved through the use of a coding system. Surveys were further coded so that their district factor grouping could be identified.

It was important to assure participants that no harm would come to them or their respective districts in any way as a result of their participation in the study. Participants were guaranteed that their perceptions would remain anonymous and confidential. Babbi (1983) notes that the promise of confidentiality ensures that the identity of participants not be revealed publicly. The results of the NJPISCEI were anonymous in that respondents could not be identified with a single given response.

Statistical Procedures

The following statistical procedures were used to analyze the data to examine differences in the perceptions of equity related to New Jersey's proposed school choice plan among District Factor Groups: A factorial ANOVA with one dependent variable and one independent variable with a qualifier was utilized for the study. A factorial ANOVA yields F tests for interaction as well as main effect for administrators and district factor groupings, allowing comparisons across administrator groups and district factor groupings. The data were screened to make certain that the assumptions of factorial ANOVA were not violated.

Cohen's (1988) power analysis program suggests a sample size of 120 to attain a power level of .8 with an Alpha level of .05 and an effect size of .3. The maximum number of responses would be 240 for both chief school administrators and principals, with eighty districts selected from each socioeconomic status grouping: low, medium, and high. An anticipated 50% rate of return from the randomly selected chief school administrators and

principals would provide the power necessary for the study.

Summary

This chapter contains information relative to the participants of this study, specifically chief school administrators and principals from the 240 stratified selected school districts throughout the state of New Jersey. They were selected in order to determine the perceptions of these constituencies concerning the equity issues related to the proposed implementation of interdistrict school choice in the state of New Jersey.

Also contained in this chapter is information on the New Jersey Proposed Interdistrict School Choice Perception of Equity Inventory, the instrument used in the study, as well as information concerning its development and the rationale for its use. It further contains information on the collection of data and the statistical procedures used to test the listed hypotheses.

This study may bring about an awareness of the perceptions of chief school administrators and principals across District Factor Groups and Socioeconomic Status subgroups regarding the equity issues of school choice. It will enable a determination to be made whether these constituencies, those charged with the day to day operations of the state's public schools, feel that interdistrict school choice is a viable alternative to our current practice of assigning students to schools solely on the basis of attendance districts. It will also determine whether it is perceived by these constituencies that there is a need to further study interdistrict school choice before implementation, as well as identify specific areas of concern regarding the equity issue of school choice.

Chapter IV

ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

The purpose of this study was to determine the impact of New Jersey's proposed interdistrict school choice program relative to the standards of educational equity as perceived by chief school administrators and principals. These perceptions were examined across District Factor Groups (DFGs) to ascertain whether DFG and socioeconomic status had any bearings on these perceptions. Research findings and data analysis are presented in this chapter.

The participants in this study were chief school administrators and principals from selected stratified school districts throughout the state of New Jersey. These districts are representative of northern, central, and southern regions of the state, and include all District Factor Groupings.

A total of 240 districts were selected for this study, with eighty from each stratified socioeconomic grouping: low, medium, and high. Each socioeconomic status level is made up of approximately one third of the districts selected, and is divided according to District Factor Groups. Districts Factor Groups A, B, and CD comprised the low socioeconomic status level, with DE and FG making up the middle SES level. The high SES level included districts designated GH, I, and J (See Table 2). District Factor Grouping, a designation by the New Jersey State Department of Education, is an indicator of the socioeconomic status of the citizens within each school district, and has been useful for the comparative reporting of test results from New Jersey's statewide testing programs.

A variety of concerns led to the decision to oversample in the following larger (3501+ students) school districts from among the stratified sample: Newark, Essex County, and Trenton, Mercer County (Low socioeconomic status); Old Bridge and Woodbridge Townships, Middlesex County (Middle socioeconomic status); and Scotch Plains-Farwood, Union County, and East Windsor Regional, Mercer County (High socioeconomic status). Concerns included having selected districts that are among the state's largest represented in this study by the perceptions of a single principal. Oversampling of principals was further deemed necessary in order to match the number of principals with the number of superintendents polled, since thirty-seven districts from the sample are small, one school districts in which the chief school administrator also fills the role of principal, and, thus, from which no principal was selected. Since the primary role of these individuals is that of chief school administrator, for the purposes of this study, they were included in that category. Oversampling would also provide a greater likelihood of attaining a sufficient number of completed surveys to conduct this study.

A total of 480 surveys were disseminated among 240 school districts; 240 to superintendents and 240 to principals. A total of 282 surveys were ultimately returned. Of these, seven were found to be unusable in the study. Three were unusable since the respondent had either cut off or obliterated all coding indicating District Factor Grouping and administrator status. One returned the survey blank, with a note attached indicating the he was filling the position on an interim basis and thus felt that his input was invalid. One individual returned the cover letter but no survey. Another noted that he would not respond to a coded survey, and one survey was excluded because the respondent simply wrote across the top, "Don't know." One hundred twenty-four Principals (51.6%)

and 151 Superintendents (62.9%) returned the survey for a total of 275 valid returns (57.3%).

Respondents, by more than a three to one ratio, were likely to be male than female. Moreover, the respondents were far more likely to be employed in a district with student enrollment that is rising rather than falling or remaining constant. Of the 271 respondents who listed their age, the majority were between the ages of fifty and fifty-nine (55.8%); The mean age for principal was 49.5, while the mean age for superintendents was 53.1 (See Table 4).

Table 4

Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Level</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>Valid percent</u>
Sex	Male	209	77
	Female	64	23
Enrollment Level	Rising	201	73
	Falling	15	6
	Constant	58	21
Age	≤ 39	9	3.3
	40-49	83	30.6
	50-59	151	55.8
	≥ 60	28	10.3

All data were screened and frequency distribution conducted to look for obvious data entry errors. None were found. When a respondent wrote "DK" or "Don't know" to a particular item on the survey, their score on that item was coded as a "3," or neutral response. Negative variables were recoded to positive for the purpose of running a reliability analysis. Results of NJPISCEI were then transformed to a total score, with a higher score favorable to school choice, and lower scores less favorable (See Table 5).

The New Jersey Proposed Interdistrict School Choice Perception of Equity Inventory, a twenty item Likert-type scale, scores perceptions on an underlying continuum. A response of five indicates strong agreement, four represents agreement, three indicates a neutral response, a two represents disagreement, and a response of one indicates strong disagreement. A mean score of sixty would indicate a neutral position by these constituencies as a whole; scores over sixty would indicate favorable perceptions of school choice, while scores under sixty indicate perceptions less favorable to school choice.

Chronbach's Alpha test was conducted on all twenty NJPISCEI items for the purpose of establishing internal consistency reliability. The observed Alpha level, .94, suggests adequate internal reliability. The data were screened through the use of box plots and normal probability plots and the results indicate that the data met the assumptions of normality, equal variances (homoscedasticity) and independence. Levene's test for equality of variances was non-significant with $F(5, 269) = .98, p = .432$.

Table 5

Means and Standard Deviations of the NJPISCPEI

<u>District Factor Grouping</u>	<u>Administrator Level</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std. Dev.</u>	<u>N</u>
Low (A, B, CD)	Principal	48.13	17.09	45
	Superintendent	47.59	16.94	49
	Total	47.85	16.98	94
Middle (DE, FG)	Principal	46.66	14.99	38
	Superintendent	48.37	16.39	54
	Total	47.66	15.77	92
High (GH, I, J)	Principal	47.56	13.94	41
	Superintendent	51.12	14.96	48
	Total	49.48	14.52	89
Total	Principal	47.49	15.35	124
	Superintendent	48.99	16.09	151
	Total	48.31	15.75	275

The results of the NJPISCPEI, with mean scores less than sixty, suggest that overall, principals and superintendents had negative opinions of school choice and feel that the implementation of the same will result in inequities in a variety of areas. The means were similar across District Factor Groups, indicating that the perceptions of chief school administrators and principals did not differ

greatly because of SES or District Factor Grouping. Finally, the means for principals and superintendents were comparable within District Factor Groups, indicating little difference between the perceptions of these two constituencies within District Factor Groups.

Table 6

Univariate ANOVA of NJPISCPEI by DFG and Administrator Status

Source	Type III SS	df	Mean Sq.	F	Sig	EtaSq	Obs.Pow
DFG Hypothesis	167.95	2	83.98	.87	.53	.46	.09
Error	192.88	2	96.44				
AdLvl Hypothesis	169.97	2	168.97	1.75	.31	.46	.13
Error	193.32	2	96.49				
DFG Hypothesis	192.88	2	96.44	.38	.68	.03	.11
AdLv Error	67,489.53	269	250.89				

Table 6 shows that the main effect of District Factor Grouping, the main effect of administrator level, and the interaction term were all non-significant. This result is consistent with the observations regarding the means from Table five. Table 6 shows that the effect size estimates (Eta squared) for the main effect of District Factor Group and administrator level were in the moderate range. The effect size estimate for interaction was near zero. The non-significant

results and low power are consistent with the small differences that were observed among the group means.

The results of the research questions posed in this study are as follows:

Question 1: There were no significant differences in the perceptions of Chief School Administrators among different District Factor Groups regarding the equity issues of school choice.

Question 2: There were no significant differences in the perceptions of principals among different District Factor Groups regarding the equity issues of school choice.

Question 3: There were no significant differences between the perceptions of principals and chief school administrators regarding the equity issues of school choice.

The overall scores of these constituencies on the New Jersey Proposed Interdistrict School Choice Perception of Equity Inventory were, in fact, strikingly similar across District Factor Groups and Socioeconomic Status levels regardless of administrator status. This indicates that little difference exists among these constituencies regarding their perceptions of equity related to school choice; the majority perceived that the implementation of interdistrict school choice in New Jersey would prove to be inequitable.

Analysis of Selected Survey Items

An analysis of the results of selected items on the New Jersey Proposed Interdistrict School Choice Perception of Equity Inventory is helpful in reviewing the results and in addressing specific equity concerns regarding the state's proposed interdistrict school choice plan. While this study presents an overall view of perceptions of equity on the part of superintendents and principals

regarding the implementation of interdistrict school choice, it is important to consider specific equity issues.

It must be noted that an analysis is not presented for each survey item. This is because numerous survey items are paired with a similar item, and are posed in both positive and negative terms for the purpose of determining reliability. In addition, items considered the most important in terms of their relation to the literature were chosen for analysis here. Moreover, items regarding equity from past surveys by researchers in the field of school choice and equity have been included. Finally, survey items which are deemed most critical to the implementation of interdistrict school choice in New Jersey were analyzed. The results of all twenty survey items are presented in table form in Appendix D.

School choice has become an extremely important issue in school reform (Strobert, 1991). It has also become increasingly popular. Polls indicate that the great majority of parents favor the concept, and choice currently exists in one form or another in more than forty-four states nationwide (Likens, 1998). Some have gone as far as to suggest that school choice is a "fundamental right" (Randall, 1991), the "essence of democracy" (Lewis, 1995), and the "American way" (Alexander, 1993).

Survey item number 1 states accordingly, "Parents should have the right to choose the school(s) their children will attend." Results on this item indicate that respondents are almost equally divided on this question, with approximately 39% responding in favor of parental choice (Strongly agree and Agree), 42% against the concept (Strongly disagree and Disagree), and 18% neutral (See Table 7). The mean score was 2.92.

Table 7

Parents Should Have the Right to Choose the School(s) Their Children Will Attend. (Item 1)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	36	13.1	13.3	13.3%
Agree	70	25.5	25.8	39.1%
Neutral	50	18.2	18.5	57.6%
Disagree	69	25.1	25.5	83.1%
Strongly Disagree	46	16.7	17.0	100%

It is interesting to note that when the same individuals were asked in item number 4 if they support the concept of interdistrict school choice in their home state of New Jersey, their responses differed dramatically. A total of 62.5% of the respondents answered that they disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement, while only 22.5% agreed (See Table 8). Fifteen percent were neutral on this item. The mean score on this item was 2.33.

Table 8

I Support Interdistrict School Choice in the State of New Jersey (Item 4)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	15	5.5	5.5	5.5%
Agree	47	17.1	17.1	22.6%
Neutral	41	14.9	14.9	37.5%
Disagree	83	30.2	30.2	67.7%
Strongly Disagree	89	32.4	32.4	100%

Lee, Croniger, and Smith (1994) and Likens (1998) note strong overall support for the concept of school choice, and further note that theoretical support for choice is strong among various constituencies, in some cases as high as 80 percent. It is therefore not surprising that, as a group, the superintendents and principals surveyed also voiced support for theoretical school choice.

It should be noted, however, that item 1 deals with the theory of school choice, and does not necessarily refer to the actual implementation of a choice program. This theoretical support of choice can be viewed as being very similar to support for other social reforms, such as the building of new prisons. Many may agree that such reforms are needed as long as they are "not in my backyard." The results of items 1 and 4 indicate that respondents may have felt that choice, in theory, is right and just, and may be the "American way" and the "democratic ideal," but not in my backyard or school.

Item 5 states that the implementation of interdistrict school choice in New Jersey will result in inequities in the delivery of instruction to students. One of the assumptions of school choice is that it promotes equity in the delivery of instruction. Some, however, believe that choice is more likely to increase inequity than lessen it (Astin, 1992; Carnoy, 1995; Howe, 1991).

More than two out of three respondents agreed that choice would, in fact, result in inequities in the delivery of instruction. Only 19% disagreed; 13% were neutral (See Table 9). The mean score on this item was 3.79, indicating that most respondents believe that choice will most decidedly result in inequities .

Table 9

Interdistrict Choice Will Result in Inequities in the Delivery of Instruction (Item 5)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	12	4.4	4.4	4.4%
Agree	41	14.9	15.0	19.3%
Neutral	36	13.1	13.0	32.5%
Disagree	88	32.0	32.1	64.6%
Strongly Disagree	97	35.3	35.4	100%

Item number 6 asks whether the implementation of interdistrict choice in New Jersey will exacerbate differences between rich and poor students. Schneider, Schiller, and Coleman (1996) note that the introduction of choice options would be of special benefit to families who by reason of race, education,

or income are least able to exercise effective voice in their children's education.

The Carnegie Foundation (1992), on the other hand, argues that choice will widen the gap between the privileged and the disadvantaged, make a mockery of the goal of equality and opportunity for all, and exacerbate inequalities in educational opportunity, especially among minority children. Levin (1989) and Petronio (1996) suggest that choice will increase socioeconomic stratification. Rassef and Rothstein (1993) question whether families with few economic resources would take advantage of choice if it were offered, while Lee (1994) found that while low socioeconomic families were more likely to voice opinions in favor of choice, they did not necessarily take advantage of available programs. Ambler (1994) notes that his analysis of school choice plans in Britain, France, and the Netherlands shows that the primary effect of school choice is its natural tendency to increase the educational gap between the privileged and disadvantaged.

The term "level playing field" is often used to refer to the notion that all children should have an equal chance for success at the starting gate of life, and that schools should provide equitable educational opportunities to ensure that all have a more or less equal chance in society. It is, however, generally agreed that students have not been provided a level playing field. Some districts spend two to three times as much as neighboring districts in per pupil expenditures. In 39 states, the richest districts spend at least twice as much as poorest, and in 8 states, the richest spend four times as much (Carnegie Foundation, 1992). In New Jersey, there are dramatic differences in per pupil expenditures, from a high of \$14,186 in Alpine, to a low of \$5,356 in Prospect Park (New Jersey Department of Education, 1999). Most agree that these fiscal disparities from district to district must be eliminated. McGee and

Kissane (1994) argue that policies need to be put in place to ensure that racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic segregation does not occur.

Seventy-six percent responded that the implementation of choice would, in fact, exacerbate differences between rich and poor students. Only 14% disagreed, while 10% were neutral. With a mean score of 3.99, this item had the most extreme mean score of the twenty items on the NJPISCPEI, indicating that the respondents had their strongest opinion on this item (See Table 10).

Table 10

School Choice Will Exacerbate Differences Between Rich and Poor Students
(Item 6)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	113	41.1	41.1	41.1%
Agree	96	34.9	34.9	76.0%
Neutral	27	9.8	9.8	85.8%
Disagree	29	10.5	10.5	96.4%
Strongly Disagree	10	3.6	3.6	100%

Item number 7 states that the implementation of interdistrict school choice will exacerbate differences between choosing and non-choosing families. While school choice is assumed to provide equal access to educational opportunity, Lee (1994) and Witte (1993) note that there are socioeconomic differences between participants and non-participants that reflect further segregation

among most disadvantaged families. Witte further found that choice families were significantly smaller, had fewer children and substantially higher educational aspirations for their children. Moreover, these parents were much more likely to work at home with their children, and were much stronger participants in their children's prior schools.

Two out of three respondents to item 7 believe that interdistrict school choice will exacerbate differences between choosing and non-choosing families. Less than 12% felt that it would not, while 20% were neutral (See Table 11). The mean score was 3.82.

Table 11

Interdistrict School Choice Will Exacerbate Differences Between Choosing and Non-choosing Families (Item 7)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	82	29.8	30.0	30.0%
Agree	100	36.4	36.6	66.6%
Neutral	59	21.5	21.6	88.2%
Disagree	24	8.7	8.8	97.0%
Strongly Disagree	8	2.9	2.9	100%

Survey item number 8 states, "Interdistrict School Choice Will Result in Inequities Among Students Along Racial Lines." Tyack (1992) suggests that choice would provide a method of racial desegregation that is less controversial

than busing, less likely to result in white flight from urban schools, and more likely to make schools more socially integrated and equitable. However, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (1991) suggests that freedom to choose is being used by white parents to desert schools with high minority populations.

Lutz (1996) notes that racial and ethnic segregation seems to serve as a barrier to equal educational opportunity, while Williams, Hancher, and Hunter (1983) and Fossey (1994) found that choice was more likely to be utilized by white parents. Wells (1995) notes a fear among those who have studied the history of race and education in America that choice and a free market such as the one proposed by Chubb and Moe (1990) would not provide sufficient incentives for white parents to enroll their children in racially and socioeconomically integrated schools. Moreover, Fuller (1996) and Smith (1995) argue that there is evidence that freedom of choice may translate into freedom to segregate.

Henig's (1995) study in Montgomery County, Maryland, revealed that awareness of choice varied greatly according to race: 72% of whites were aware of choice options, while Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics were aware in percentages decreasing respectively to 39%. This, of course, raises equity concerns. Wells (1995) notes the ease with which minority students could be excluded from the best schools in choice programs, while Fuller (1996) reminds us that parents choose schools for reasons unrelated to educational effectiveness, including race, thus promoting racial segregation and eroding progress toward integration. Witte (1993) found Blacks to be under represented in applications for the choice program in Milwaukee, and Lee (1994) writes that minority families, while more likely to be vocal about choice, do not necessarily

take advantage of available choice options.

More than two out of three respondents to item 8 felt that interdistrict school choice would result in inequities along racial lines; Eighteen percent disagreed, and 13% were neutral (See Table 12). A mean score of 3.79 indicates relatively strong opinion.

Table 12

School Choice Will Exacerbate Inequities Along Racial Lines (Item 8)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	86	31.3	31.3	31.3%
Agree	102	37.1	37.1	68.4%
Neutral	36	13.1	13.1	81.5%
Disagree	45	16.4	16.4	97.9%
Strongly Disagree	6	2.2	2.2	100%

On item number 10, "Interdistrict School Choice Will Exacerbate Inequalities Among School Districts," nearly three out of four felt that inequities that already exist between districts would be further exacerbated by the implementation of choice. Fifteen percent disagreed, and 14% were neutral (See Table 13). Respondents were more than ten times more likely to strongly agree that choice would exacerbate inequalities among school districts than to strongly disagree.

Respondents seemed to be in agreement with Howe (1991), who cautions us that choice systems that allow receiving districts to take the best students

from the urban districts would have the pernicious effect of increasing the concentrations of problematic students in the urban districts, reducing revenues available to those districts and exacerbating the inequalities between urban and suburban schools. Martinez, Godwin, and Perna (1995) note that the results of their study further raise fears that school choice would increase existing socioeconomic and academic segregation among schools. The Carnegie Foundation (1992) also reports evidence of the negative impact of statewide choice programs on impoverished urban districts.

Table 13

Interdistrict Choice Will Exacerbate Inequalities Among School Districts

(Item 10)

	Freq	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	91	33.1	33.3	33.3%
Agree	102	37.1	37.4	70.7%
Neutral	38	13.8	13.9	84.6%
Disagree	33	12.0	12.1	96.7%
Strongly Disagree	9	3.3	3.3	100%

Table 14 is the contingency table for survey item number ten by District Factor Grouping. A Chi-square test was significant $X^2(8, N = 273) = 16.55$, $p = .035$, which suggests that District Factor Group and the responses to item ten are not independent. Table 14 shows a greater tendency for individuals from

both the high and low District Factor Groups/Socioeconomic Status subgroups to agree with the item than those from the middle District Factor Groups/Socioeconomic status, who tend to remain relatively neutral. This shows a greater concern on the part of superintendents and principals from both high and low socioeconomic levels that the implementation of interdistrict school choice in New Jersey will negatively impact their schools/districts.

Table 14

Crosstab of the Responses to Item 10 by District Factor Group/Socioeconomic Status

		Low (a,b,cd)	Middle (de,fg)	High (gh,i,j)	Total
Strongly Agree	Count	31	27	33	91
Agree	Count	37	31	34	10
Neutral	Count	8	22	8	38
Disagree	Count	10	10	13	33
Strongly Disagree	Count	6	2	1	9
Total	Count	92	92	89	273

Item 11 states, "Interdistrict school choice will favor those already advantaged." Schneider, Schiller, and Coleman (1996) write that the introduction of choice options would be of special benefit to families who by

reason of race, education, or income are least able to exercise effective voice in their children's education. Others question whether school choice would work best for those economically and educationally advantaged (Carnegie Foundation, 1992; Carnoy, 1995; Kozol, 1992; Martinez et al., 1994).

Diegmuller (1992) suggests that choice programs in Massachusetts tend to most benefit white and middle income families, and Maddeus' study suggests that high and middle income families were more likely to have gathered choice related information. Rassel and Rothstein (1993) question whether families with few economic resources would take advantage of choice if it were more widely offered, while Moore and Davenport (1990) argue that poor and minority families do not have the information and resources necessary to exercise choice effectively. Smith (1995) addresses the issue of equity with regards to transportation by noting that districts that do not provide transportation to choice students leave the less affluent behind, creating a system that works better for those already advantaged.

The results of Item 11 show that nearly 58% felt that the implementation of interdistrict choice would favor those already advantaged, while 24% disagreed. Eighteen percent were neutral (See Table 15).

Table 15

Interdistrict Choice Will Favor Those Already Financially Advantaged (Item 11)

	Freq	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	70	25.5	25.5	25.5%
Agree	89	32.4	32.4	57.9%
Neutral	49	17.8	17.8	75.7%
Disagree	59	21.5	21.5	97.2%
Strongly Disagree	8	2.9	2.9	100%

Item 12 reads, "Disadvantaged students will benefit as a result of school choice in New Jersey." The State of New Jersey notes that the purpose of the interdistrict choice program is to provide greater choice to parents and students in selecting a school that best meets the needs of the student, and thus improves educational opportunities for all of New Jersey's citizens. Studies, however, suggest that choice programs tend to increase the educational gap between the privileged and the underprivileged (Ambler, 1994). Howe (1991) argues that choice systems can allow concentrations of problematic students in urban districts. Despite the portrayal of the less economically and educationally advantaged as apathetic and uninterested in their children's education, Schneider, Schiller, and Coleman (1996) argue that they exercise choice to a greater degree than white families with higher levels of education. This claim, however, is highly disputed. A common theme that emerges is that choice programs exclude all but the highest achieving students and the most involved

parents (Allen, 1995; Fuller & Elmore, 1996).

The results of Item 12 show that only 27% of the superintendents and principals felt that the implementation of school choice would result in benefits for New Jersey's disadvantaged youngsters. Nearly 50 percent disagreed, and 23 percent were neutral (See Table 16).

Table 16

Disadvantaged Students Will Benefit as a Result of School Choice in NJ

(Item 12)

	Freq	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	13	4.7	4.7	4.7%
Agree	61	22.2	22.3	27.0%
Neutral	64	23.3	23.4	50.4%
Disagree	94	34.2	34.3	84.7%
Strongly Disagree	42	15.0	15.3	100%

The results of studies similar to Fossey's (1994) examination of 20 Massachusetts school districts which revealed that families tend to choose schools in districts with higher levels of parent education, higher levels of student achievement, and higher per pupil expenditures than their home districts led to the formulation of Item 13: "Proposed interdistrict school choice will increase socioeconomic segregation of students in New Jersey."

Astin (1992) notes that the selection process associated with school choice

can concentrate the best students, often those from the wealthiest and best educated families, in a few selective schools, while the remaining students attend less desirable schools elsewhere. He notes that these realities suggest that a likely consequence of implementing a policy of choice would be to magnify the existing social stratification of schools, and existing socioeconomic differences within the larger society would widen. He notes that choice is indeed tempting and does have a great deal of superficial political appeal, but considers it a radical concept with serious consequences.

Fuller (1996) notes that as the selection process for choice schools becomes more intense, more affluent families will be better served, and the children of low income and least involved parents will be left behind. Moreover, he notes that those parents already most involved in their children's education are more likely to participate in choice programs. Lee, Croniger, and Smith (1994) add that an interdistrict school choice plan would further stratify an already inequitable distribution of social, economic, and academic resources.

Henig (1994) notes that advocates of choice have underestimated the potential harm in school choice, particularly with regards to segregation. Levin (1989) and Petronio (1996) note that choice will increase social and economic segregation of students, while Ambler (1994) adds that better educated and higher income parents have more of the knowledge, resources and assertiveness needed to make choice work. Moore (1989) calls loosely implemented choice programs a new form of segregation, while Smith (1995) cautions us that choice can, in fact, further stratify the community and have significant effects on educational opportunities available to certain sectors of the population. Elmore's (1990) findings suggest that parental choice would negatively impact those who lack information and market power, and this in turn

would result in highly segregated school populations and increased inequities. Bhagavan (1996) suggests that choice may cause a two-tiered system of wealthy and disadvantaged, while Raywid (1987) argues that choice, if not implemented properly, may inhibit social mobility and be inequitable. Others fear that choice may simply translate into freedom to segregate (Fuller, 1996; Smith).

Although the intent of choice programs overall, and in New Jersey in particular, is to expand opportunities for all to receive high quality education, Lee et al. (1994) note that we must consider the possibility that choice would increase social stratification.

The results of survey item number 13, "Interdistrict School Choice Would Increase Socioeconomic Segregation of Students," are as follows: 62.5% of the respondents agreed, while 20% disagreed and 17.5% were neutral (See Table 17). A mean score of 3.63 further indicates agreement with the statement.

Table 17

Interdistrict Choice Will Increase Socioeconomic Segregation of Students (Item 13)

	Freq	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	65	23.6	23.6	23.6%
Agree	107	38.9	62.5	62.5%
Neutral	48	17.5	17.5	80.0%
Disagree	46	16.7	16.7	96.7%
Strongly Disagree	9	3.3	3.3	100%

Item 14 states that the proposed implementation of interdistrict school choice in New Jersey would result in inequities in educational opportunity for students, while paired Item 17 states that choice would provide all students opportunities for learning that are now available mainly to the privileged. Odden and Picus (1992) describe the principle of equal opportunity as dictating that variables such as property value per pupil should not be related to resource distribution, while another of the assumptions of choice is that all students can gain equal access to educational opportunity regardless of their financial situation or where they live.

Norquist (1996) suggests that choice would open a rich array of educational opportunities to all students and give less affluent families opportunities for learning that are now available mainly to the privileged. Paulu (1989) adds that the implementation of choice plans will open up an unlimited and enhanced

range of educational opportunities, especially for the disadvantaged. Alexander (1993) and DuPont (1990) suggest that choice would give the disadvantaged increased educational opportunities. Lutz (1996), however, notes that racial and ethnic segregation serve as a barrier to equal educational opportunity, while Fuller (1996) adds that choice programs lead to greater inequity in the nature of educational opportunities available to impoverished families.

The Carnegie Foundation (1992) suggests that the implementation of choice will ultimately exacerbate inequalities in educational opportunity, especially among minority children. More than 61% of the respondents agreed; 19% disagreed, and 19% were neutral (See Table 18). The mean score was 3.64.

Table 18

Choice Will Result in Inequities in Educational Opportunities in NJ (Item 14)

	Freq	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	65	23.6	23.9	23.9%
Agree	103	37.5	37.9	61.8%
Neutral	52	18.9	19.1	80.9%
Disagree	46	16.7	16.9	97.8%
Strongly Disagree	6	2.2	2.2	100%

Another of the assumptions of school choice is that parents will choose a quality school that best suits their needs, and in doing so, will help eliminate

racial segregation in schools. Tyack (1992) suggests that school choice would provide a method of racial desegregation that is less controversial than busing, less likely to result in white flight from urban schools, and more likely to make schools more socially integrated and equitable. Corona (1994), however, calls choice a ticket toward segregation and further inequity, while Lutz (1996) sees choice leading to an increase in segregation based on race and ethnicity. Moreover, Wells (1995) argues that a free market in education such as the one proposed by Chubb and Moe (1990) would not provide sufficient incentives for white parents to enroll their children in racially and socioeconomically integrated schools.

Henig's (1995) study in Montgomery County, Maryland, revealed that awareness of choice decreased from a high of 72% for white parents to a low of 39% respectively for Blacks, Asians, and Hispanics, raising equity issues. Moreover, Henig noted that both blacks and whites chose schools based on racial composition. Wells (1995) notes the ease with which minority students could be excluded from the best schools in a more deregulated system.

Fuller (1996) notes that parents often choose schools along color lines, promoting racial segregation and eroding progress toward integration. This is consistent with the arguments of Lutz (1996) and Wells (1995) who note that choice programs can lead to the freedom to segregate.

Nearly two out of three of the respondents indicated on Item number 15, "Interdistrict school choice will result in increased racial and ethnic segregation in New Jersey's schools," that they believe racial and ethnic segregation would, in fact, increase. Twenty percent felt that there would be no increase, while 17% were neutral (See Table 19). The mean score on item number 15 was 3.68, again indicating agreement.

Table 19

Interdistrict Choice Will Result in Increased Racial and Ethnic Segregation**(Item 15)**

	Freq	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	70	25.5	25.7	25.7%
Agree	102	37.1	37.5	63.2%
Neutral	46	16.7	16.9	80.1%
Disagree	50	18.2	18.4	98.5%
Strongly Disagree	4	1.5	1.5	100%

Chubb and Moe (1990) suggest that school choice would provide competition and an open market in instruction that would weed out the weak as well as reward successful schools, while Nathan (1987) argues that choice would unleash competition and market forces that would help all schools improve. Some add that our public schools are failing because they are not subject to competitive forces that force them to improve or go out of business (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Frick, 1994; Toch, 1992). According to the New Jersey Department of Education, the purpose of the interdistrict school choice program is to provide greater choice to parents in selecting a school that best meets the needs of the student and thus improves educational opportunities for all of New Jersey's citizens.

Carnoy (1995) and Ambler (1994), however, argue that increased

competition after the implementation of choice programs in other countries had a negative effect on teachers and children, and that the choice program contributed to greater inequity in pupil achievement without improving the overall quality of education. Others note that while many parents want choice, there exists no evidence that choice itself will promote academic improvement through competition (Carnoy; Cookson, 1991; Fuller, 1996; Gainey, 1995; Ogawa & Dutton, 1994; Wells, 1991; Witte, 1996). Moore and Davenport (1990) point out that rather than creating competition that helps schools improve, school choice can result in competition between students for placement.

Chief school administrators and principals were not in agreement with Item 18, "School choice would create competition that would help schools improve." Only 27% felt that choice would promote healthy competition that would help schools improve. Fifty-two% disagreed, and 21% were neutral.

Table 20

Choice Would Create Competition That Would Help All Schools Improve

(Item 18)

	Freq	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	23	8.4	8.4	8.4%
Agree	51	18.5	18.5	26.9%
Neutral	57	20.7	20.7	47.6%
Disagree	87	31.6	31.6	79.2%
Strongly Disagree	57	20.7	20.7	100%

Items 19 and 20 state that less affluent and less educated parents will be disadvantaged by the implementation of interdistrict school choice in New Jersey.

Frick (1994) suggests that urban parents may lack the knowledge or resources needed to effectively select a school, while Rubinstein, Hamar, and Adelman's (1992) Minnesota study reveals that families using choice are "far more highly educated" than non-choosers. Bridge and Blackman (1978) found that levels of information regarding parents' choice options were significantly higher among families that were "socially advantaged," while Nault and Uchitelle's (1982) study revealed that parents who were unaware of choice options tended to be less educated and less affluent. Fossey (1994) and Fuller (1996) suggest that white, better educated, and upper and middle class parents are most likely to make educational choices. Martinez et al. (1994) noted in San Antonio that choosing families were more highly educated and much more involved in their children's education both at home and at school. A common theme that emerges is that choice simply works better for those economically and educationally advantaged (Alexander, 1993; Carnegie Foundation, 1992; Carnoy, 1995; Kozol, 1992; Martinez et al.).

Fifty percent of the respondents agreed that less affluent parents would be disadvantaged by the implementation of interdistrict school choice in New Jersey, while 25% disagreed. Twenty five percent were neutral (See Table 21).

Table 21

Less Affluent Parents Will Be Disadvantaged by Interdistrict School Choice
(Item 19)

	Freq	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	50	18.2	18.2	18.2%
Agree	86	31.3	31.4	49.6%
Neutral	68	24.7	24.8	74.4%
Disagree	63	22.9	23.0	97.4%
Strongly Disagree	7	2.5	2.6	100%

Results were nearly identical for Item 20, "Parents with less education will be disadvantaged by interdistrict school choice in New Jersey." Fifty-one percent agreed, 26% disagreed, while 23 percent were neutral (See Table 22).

Table 22

Parents With Less Education Will Be Disadvantaged by Interdistrict Choice
(Item 20)

	Freq	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	49	17.8	17.9	17.9%
Agree	91	33.1	33.2	51.1%
Neutral	62	22.5	22.6	73.7%
Disagree	62	22.5	22.6	96.3%
Strongly Disagree	10	3.6	3.6	100%

Additional Comments and Concerns of Respondents

Along with the twenty items regarding perceptions of equity, the New Jersey Proposed Interdistrict School Choice Perception of Equity Inventory provided participants the opportunity to include any comments they may have on the implementation of interdistrict school choice in New Jersey. It should be noted that comments submitted are deemed to be both important and accurate due not only to the position attained by the respondent, but also due to his/her years of experience in charge of a school and/or district. While these comments for the most part, reflected anti-choice sentiment, there were many interesting comments and thoughts on both sides of the school choice debate.

The most interesting and compelling comments have been included here for the purpose of providing greater insight into the perceptions of the

respondents. They have been categorized as pro-interdistrict choice and anti-interdistrict choice, although many comments include both pros and cons. It should be further noted that for the purposes of this study, comments by both superintendents and principals have been written in the masculine gender whether the respondent is male or not.

A superintendent (Middle SES) proposed that the concept of interdistrict school choice has "tremendous potential" if all segments of our communities are properly educated about choice and their right to choose. Numerous other respondents, however, expressed concern over the dissemination of information about choice, and the ramifications of failing to adequately provide it.

One superintendent (High SES) who was decidedly pro-choice ("Interdistrict school choice would be most advantageous here in New Jersey...") pointed out that students of poverty status might be harmed unless transportation were provided and unless equitable funding was attached so that districts losing students would not be harmed. Another superintendent from the same SES stated that he believes that few districts in New Jersey will ultimately support "...this fine concept, choice," adding that the Klagholz administration has "...all but killed it," and concluding that the current plan would likely fail as proposed. Other superintendents (Middle and High SES) suggested that the advantage of the proposed choice plan would be to the receiving districts, where additional revenues would offset the fixed costs of specialized programs.

A principal (Middle SES) wrote that the competition inherent in choice is a positive. It should be noted that while this is a common assumption about choice, evidence does not necessarily support this position (Carnoy, 1995; Cookson, 1991; Fuller, 1996; Ogawa & Dutton, 1994). This principal fears that

interdistrict choice would result in the selection of schools for the wrong reasons, racial or socioeconomic, leading to segregation along these lines. He is one of the many respondents who favor improving and strengthening all neighborhood schools, as recommended by Hiebowitsh (1995).

It was interesting to note that superintendents and principals who had been employed in states where interdistrict school choice had been in effect were perhaps more inclined to see the positive aspects of New Jersey's proposed plan. One referred to his students having had the opportunity to attend a neighboring district's school which had an exemplary music program, and that district's students in turn benefiting by attending his schools. Another wrote that choice "can work," and is "how it ought to be."

One pro-choice superintendent (Low SES) expressed his support for the proposed choice plan by suggesting, "If you always do what you've always done, you'll always get what you've always gotten." However, superintendents and principals from among all SES groupings reject this "change for the sake of change" position by offering suggestions that include: "We need to move very slowly on this issue"; "...review all relevant information..."; and "A decade of planning and preparation is required before we implement any interdistrict choice program." This is the position taken by many researchers as well (Archbald, 1996; Carnegie Foundation, 1992; Fuller and Elmore, 1996).

Among those respondents less favorable to the implementation of interdistrict choice are a principal (Low SES) who believes that interdistrict school choice in our state would cause more problems than it solves. He points to transportation and financial and logistical issues. Another principal (High SES) wrote that he anticipates a bureaucratic nightmare associated with the movement of funds for students who transfer, and an increase in bureaucracy

overall. (Kozol, 1992; Jones and Ambrose, 1995).

A superintendent (Middle SES) questioned who pays for bussing and the long term bureaucratic costs. He further questioned who gets into choice schools, and worries about the special education students. He asked, "Are we setting ourselves up for magnet schools? That is, will school choice be determined by prior reputations for athletics, college enrollment percentages, etc?"

Many respondents were quick to point out that parents already have school choice since they have the option of determining where to live. Lee, Croniger, & Smith (1994) point out that many parents choose where to live based on the perceived quality of schools in an area. It is, of course, commonly understood that many parents do not have the economic ability to choose the best neighborhoods with the best schools, and must settle for what they can afford. Other superintendents and principals from all SES groupings wrote that if parents, in fact, want school choice, they, and not the taxpayers, should foot the additional bills.

A superintendent (High SES) fears that the implementation of choice will have a negative effect in districts where funding is lost due to lower enrollment. This superintendent joins the many respondents who wrote that proximity to home and the parents' workplace and/or child care provider often proves to be a major factor in parental choice. (Creedon, 1992; Fuller, 1996). Another superintendent (Middle SES) suggested that the New Jersey Proposed Interdistrict School Choice Perception of Equity Inventory used in this study only partially covers the negative aspects of interdistrict school choice. He noted that others include transportation/busing, finances, and athletic eligibility and recruitment. He added that choice would be "devastating" to his educational

program.

A principal (High SES) feels that school choice will hurt those it is meant to help, and wrote, "New Jersey could not help or fix the Abbott districts, so they're giving up and are attempting to circumvent their responsibility."

A superintendent (Low SES) wrote that choice will be a nightmare if funding for education remains fixed on property taxes. Odden and Picus (1992) note that many of the fiscal inequities that plague school finance systems are caused in large part by local financing of public schools. This superintendent fears that the selection processes would be manipulated, resulting in the depletion of the home district's best and brightest students. Superintendents and principals from all SES groupings expressed concerns for those students left behind in neighborhood schools stripped of revenues, resources, and the best students and most involved parents (Fossey, 1994; Fuller, 1996; Hlebowitsh, 1995; Wells, 1995).

One chief school administrator (Middle SES) proposed a solution other than school choice when he suggested that the first step to providing equity is for the state to assume 100% of education costs. Another superintendent (Low SES) believes that inequities will remain with or without choice, and "...choice will just exacerbate them." Yet another superintendent called the state's proposal a "Band-Aid approach," demoralizing for students and staff members left behind. His comments are among those with the common theme of improving all of our schools to help the majority of our students, not just a select few.

One Middle SES superintendent wrote, "They should move on this very carefully..." noting that there has been little or no input from principals and superintendents, the gatekeepers of the state's public schools. He alluded to

the existence of an "us and them" mentality between the New Jersey Department of Education and local administrators. It is interesting to note that participatory management and shared decision making/site based management is in vogue and lauded at the school site level, but no such participation exists at the state level.

Perhaps the most disturbing comments, however, are those that not only discussed the perceived shortcomings of interdistrict school choice, but also expressed a deep-rooted distrust of the NJ State Department of Education, the state's "motives" behind the implementation of the program, and the political system as a whole.

One principal (Middle SES) wrote that he believes that there is a "movement to systematically dismantle public education in New Jersey as we know it." Choice will make us become, he claims, a state of have's and have-not's, and adds that the strength of America is in its public schools. Note that this comment is consistent with the results of survey item number 6 in which the majority of participants responded that the implementation of school choice will, in fact, exacerbate differences between rich and poor students. It is also consistent with the comments of numerous others who advocate strengthening the neighborhood school.

"The current choice proposal is a classic example of schools being managed by a politically motivated government," suggested a superintendent (High SES). He added that the state is playing to the crowd—implementing what is currently a popular fad. Another superintendent (Low SES) wrote of his suspicion of the DOE's "real agenda."

One obviously wary middle SES superintendent expressed his distrust of the state's plan and the implementation of interdistrict choice by writing, "Choice

is a politically motivated con which could very well be the death knell to public education and a literate society as we know it." This is in keeping with the comments of Frick (1995), who notes that many consider choice a surreptitious plan that gradually places the functions of public education into private hands. Another superintendent from the same SES concurs, and wrote that "School choice is a political ploy and a sham; nothing more, nothing less."

Conclusions

The results of the New Jersey Proposed Interdistrict School Choice Perception of Equity Inventory indicate that, overall, New Jersey's superintendents and principals perceive that the implementation of interdistrict school choice would result in inequities in the delivery of instruction to students, exacerbate differences among school districts and students, and increase segregation along socioeconomic, racial, and ethnic lines.

There were no significant differences in the perceptions of chief school administrators among different District Factor Groups, nor were there significant differences in the perceptions of principals among different District Factor Groups regarding the equity issues of school choice. There were also no significant differences between the perceptions of chief school administrators and principals regarding the equity issues of school choice.

Chapter V

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents a review of the problem and provides a summary of the research findings based on an analysis of the scores of chief school administrators and principals on the New Jersey Proposed Interdistrict School Choice Perception of Equity Inventory. It further contains recommendations based on the results of the study, as well as contains suggestions for future research.

Summary of Research

This study focused on the perceptions of chief school administrators and principals regarding the equity issues of New Jersey's proposed interdistrict school choice plan as determined by the results of the New Jersey Proposed Interdistrict School Choice Perception of Equity Inventory. This instrument, a twenty item Likert type scale that measures perceptions of equity on an underlying continuum, was developed specifically for this study. Some survey items were developed from an extensive review of related literature, while others were culled from previously administered surveys regarding school choice.

Chapter I provided general information on school choice as well as background information regarding the implementation of the interdistrict school

choice plan proposed by the state of New Jersey. This introduction was followed by a statement of the problem, the purpose of the study and rationale for the hypotheses. Three research questions followed. Information on both equity and District Factor Grouping, an indicator of the socioeconomic status of citizens in each school district in New Jersey, was then presented. The significance and limitations of the study were discussed, and definitions of terms presented.

Chapter II was organized into areas which identified the key literature components: Arguments of both school choice advocates and opponents, school choice as either a public or private good, choice-related assumptions, a discussion of market theory as related to school choice, and a review of the literature as it relates to equity in school choice. Chapter II concluded with a review of alternative schools and a discussion of the current state of school choice options in New Jersey. The review of the literature confirmed the need to continue the study regarding the impact of the state's proposed interdistrict school choice plan on educational equity.

Chapter III provided an explanation of the methodology used in the study. It included the assignment of school districts and District Factor Groups to stratified levels of socioeconomic status, sample selection, and the development of the New Jersey Proposed Interdistrict School Choice Perception of Equity Inventory and rationale for its use. It further discussed the collection of data and the statistical procedures utilized.

Chapter IV contained the analysis of the data. Demographic characteristics of the sample were presented, as were means and standard deviations of the NJPISCOPEI, and a Univariate ANOVA by District Factor Group and Administrator status. Statistical data and a narrative were presented regarding

the overall results of the New Jersey Proposed Interdistrict School Choice Perception of Equity Inventory. It also included the perceptions of superintendents and principals on individual survey items. Further included were the comments of those respondents who took the opportunity to include their feelings on the implementation of choice in New Jersey as requested in the NJPISCPEI.

This information was summarized and reviewed in Chapter V. Conclusions and subsequent recommendations were further presented in Chapter V.

Results of Research Questions

The results of the research questions posed in this study are as follows:

Question 1: There were no significant differences in the perceptions of Chief School Administrators among different District Factor Groups regarding the equity issues of school choice.

Question 2: There were no significant differences in the perceptions of principals among different District Factor Groups regarding the equity issues of school choice.

Question 3: There were no significant differences between the perceptions of chief school administrators and principals regarding the equity issues of school choice.

The overall scores of these constituencies on the New Jersey Proposed Interdistrict School Choice Perception of Equity Inventory were strikingly similar across District Factor Groups and Socioeconomic Status levels regardless of administrator status; the majority of the participants perceived that the implementation of interdistrict school choice in New Jersey would prove to be inequitable.

While this study provided quantitative data on the perceptions of superintendents and principals concerning the equity issues of school choice, the NJPISCPEI provided participants the opportunity to include qualitative responses regarding equity and school choice. The results were similar to their quantitative responses in that superintendents and principals voiced opinions that were largely opposed to the implementation of interdistrict school choice in New Jersey, and suggested that choice would ultimately prove to be inequitable.

While respondents felt, at least in theory, that parents should be able to choose the schools their children will attend, they overwhelmingly rejected the implementation of interdistrict choice in New Jersey. They further felt that choice would result in inequities in the delivery of instruction to students, exacerbate differences among students along racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic lines, favor those already advantaged by race, education, or socioeconomic status, and result in increased segregation.

Conclusions

Strobert (1991) notes that school choice has become an extremely important issue in school reform. Meier (1991) argues that choice is the necessary catalyst for the kind of dramatic restructuring that most agree is needed to produce a better educated citizenry, while the Carnegie Foundation (1992) suggests that choice, at its best, may empower parents, stimulate teachers to be more creative, and give students a sense of attachment to their schools and learning. Despite the notion that school choice has emerged as the most viable path to educational success and is considered the "essence of democracy" (Lewis, 1995), the results of this study indicate that, overall, chief

school administrators and principals in selected stratified districts held negative perceptions regarding the equity issue of the implementation of interdistrict school choice in the state of New Jersey. These results are in keeping with the results of other studies in which superintendents and principals were found to be less than enthusiastic about school choice (Jennings, 1989; Martin, 1994; Tannenbaum, 1990). It must be noted, however, that those studies did not deal solely with the issue of equity.

Opponents of choice often ask why many consider choice to be the best option to improve New Jersey's schools. An argument favoring choice as a vehicle for educational equity is made by those who claim that it would serve as a means for the disadvantaged to gain access to better schools than the ones to which they are assigned by residential location (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Coons, Clune, & Sugarman, 1970). It is noted that parents with greater income already exercise school choice by choosing where to live. Schneider, Schiller, and Coleman (1996) believe that the introduction of choice options would be of special benefit to families disadvantaged by reason of race, education, or income. Lee (1994) claims that expanded access, even in theory, is a historically significant idea for socially and racially disadvantaged Americans, and that many glean support for this claim in findings that choice is favored by respondents from low resource districts. Lee's findings, however, do not support claims that choice policy implementation would actually advance social equity aims. She is in agreement with Moore and Davenport's (1990) findings in their study of choice in several large cities, that choice would result in some schools improving, and most others becoming much worse.

Kozol (1992) and Jones and Ambrose (1995) note that there are numerous problems inherent in school choice, such as increased transportation costs,

increased bureaucracy, and logistical problems with information dissemination, busing and oversubscription that make choice expensive and constricting. Astin (1992) and Wells (1991) argue that bureaucracy would grow considerably under choice plans. NJPISCPEI respondents expressed similar concerns.

Fuller and Elmore (1996) suggest that rising enthusiasm over school choice has far outpaced attempts to assess the concrete effects of choice programs, while Archbald (1996) and Strobert (1991) note that research on school choice programs is still extremely limited. Moreover, there is little or no evidence that choice itself will promote academic improvement through competition (Carnoy, 1995; Cookson, 1991; Fuller, 1996; Gainey, 1995; Ogawa & Dutton, 1994; Wells, 1991; Witte, 1996). Another common theme that emerges in the literature is that choice programs exclude all but the highest achieving students or those with the most involved parents (Allen, 1995; Fuller, 1996). Fuller argues that as selectivity becomes more intense, families that are better off will more likely be served, and the children of the lowest income and least involved parents will be left behind. This "creaming off" of the best students serves to concentrate high achieving students in choice schools and leaves behind lower achievers in neighborhood schools. This was also of great concern to New Jersey's superintendents and principals.

Chubb and Moe (1991) suggest that markets and parental choice will result in competition that will cause schools to become less bureaucratic and more autonomous. Cookson (1991), however, argues that Chubb and Moe are suggesting that self interest is superior to collective effort, and adds that there is no evidence that choice will lead to better schools or alleviate the shameful conditions of millions of American children who are ill-nourished, ill-housed, and ill-educated. He adds that choice policies that ignore educational and

social realities are unlikely to succeed and may even prove harmful.

Howe (1991) cautions us that choice systems that allow receiving districts to take the best students from urban districts would further exacerbate inequalities between urban and suburban districts. He suggests that elaborate information systems be established and transportation provided. Without these components, he notes, any choice plan is fatally flawed. Respondents agreed, as suggested by their responses on the NJPISCPEI.

Many further question why choice should be implemented at all since very low percentages of parents in any state where participation is optional have exercised their right to switch schools, and those who do often do so for reasons unrelated to educational effectiveness (Carnegie Foundation, 1992; Hakim, Seidenstat, & Bowman, 1994; Rubenstein, Hamar, & Adelman, 1992; Strobert, 1991). Parents choose schools for a variety of non-academic reasons (Bechtel, 1991; Creedon, 1992; Lewis, 1995; Ogawa, 1994) including parental convenience and job proximity (Rubenstein et al., 1992).

Parents also choose schools on the basis of location and racial and social composition rather than on the perceived quality of instructional programs (Bridge and Blackman, 1978). Henig (1995) notes that both white and African-American parents tended to choose schools based on racial composition and location rather than on concrete indicators of educational quality. Fuller (1996) suggests that this may promote racial segregation and erode progress made toward integration. Since the reality is that parents pick schools for a variety of reasons, it is difficult to see how moving students from one school to another will, in and of itself, renew public education. Superintendents and principals responding to the NJPISCPEI expressed concern about an increase in racial and ethnic segregation as a result of parental choice.

Perhaps the most troubling school choice related issue concerns those students left behind in neighborhood schools. Fossey (1994) and Fuller (1996) suggest that non-choosing parents and their children would be left behind in inferior schools when better educated and more affluent families choose to leave. Wells (1991) notes that a primary concern is that neighborhood schools will become dumping grounds for low achievers, while the strongest students, both academically and economically, will take advantage of choice. Petracco (1998) voices his concern that choice programs will dilute the public education system by draining state and local funds from districts and generating additional costs. The Office for Economic Cooperation and Development (1991) notes that as children move out of the urban public schools, funding decreases and the ability of the school to provide a quality education for its remaining students is negatively impacted. These concerns were duly noted by respondents as well.

Rassel and Rothstein (1993) argue that the first and most important question about choice is, "Does it promote equality of educational opportunity?" Odden and Picus (1992) note that many of the fiscal inequalities that plague school finance systems are caused, in large part, by local financing of public schools. They describe the principle of equal opportunity as dictating that variables such as property value per pupil should not be related to resource distribution. This principle is often referred to as fiscal neutrality (Coons, Clune, & Sugarman, 1970). Wise (1969) suggests that equity be described as equal access to a uniform level of educational services, and since education is a state constitutional responsibility, he argues that the state should not allow educational quality to vary because of the accident of a child's living in a rich or poor district, or because of taxpayer willingness to support through local taxation either a high, medium, or low quality education program. The quality of

the educational program, he notes, should be decided statewide and provided to all students on an equal basis.

The New Jersey Supreme Court, in its 1973, Robinson v. Cahill decision, expressed the image of the "level playing field," or the notion that all children should have an equal chance for success at the starting gate of life, and that schools should provide equitable educational opportunities to ensure that all have a more or less equal chance in society. Furthermore, in its 1990, Abbott v. Burke decision it suggests that the educational needs of students in poorer districts vastly exceed those of others, especially those from wealthier districts. Gintis (1995) notes that the existing degree of inequity in education is often justified by the argument that local schools should be financed by local taxes, ensuring that inequalities among communities translate into similar inequalities among schools. He believes that this justification would be difficult to support in a system of choice. Jones and Ambrose (1995) note that funding inequities are a significant problem inherent in choice, and argue that choice does not yet offer a vehicle for equalizing expenditures or guaranteeing equity in education.

The question remains whether New Jersey's interdistrict school choice plan would help produce a "level playing field," and provide equality of educational opportunity as described by Odden and Picus (1992) and Wise (1969), or add to the existing degree of inequity in education. The results of this study clearly indicate that New Jersey's superintendents and principals believe the latter.

Recommendations

While it is noted that the literature concerning school choice is mixed and achievement data extremely limited, a review of the same, coupled with the

findings of this study, suggest the following recommendations:

Recommendation 1. Based on the critical nature of chief school administrators and principals as implementors of the choice program, it would seem to be prudent to delay the implementation of interdistrict school choice in the State of New Jersey until further studies can be conducted and the potential outcomes of such implementation can be determined. The Carnegie Foundation (1992) notes that most statewide choice plans have been swiftly and arbitrarily imposed. It has been suggested that New Jersey's proposed choice program was approved "...because legislators were not especially alert when the administration was quietly easing the choice amendment into the final school funding bill..." ("Not Much Chance," 1998) and because legislators may not have been cognizant of the ramifications of their actions (Fitzgerald, 1998).

The state's school choice program is opposed by both the New Jersey Education Association (1998) and the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (1998) who propose that program implementation be delayed in order to allow time for further study and statewide hearings on the issue (NJPSA, 1998). New Jersey Education Association President Michael Johnson cautions us that school choice is an experiment in education, the results of which should be carefully measured before expansion or even continuation is warranted (NJEA, 1999).

Fuller and Elmore (1996) further caution us against rushing into choice programs, noting that they tend to reward parents already more committed to their youngsters' education, and leave behind those who receive the least help and encouragement. Martinez et al. (1995) concur, noting that choice would increase socioeconomic and academic segregation.

According to the Carnegie Foundation (1992), choice works best when it is

arrived at gradually, locally, and voluntarily. They further suggest that choice is least successful when programs are imposed on districts by legislative mandate or when choice programs have been enacted without thoughtful deliberation or public comment. When this is the case, school boards are left with little opportunity to anticipate the impact of such legislation, and parents and teachers are left largely in the dark. Fliegel (1993) notes that in Montclair, Cambridge, and East Harlem, where it is generally agreed that choice programs are working effectively, parents were involved right from the inception of the program.

Research on school choice programs is still extremely limited (Archbald, 1996; Strobert, 1991). The Carnegie Foundation (1992) and Gainey (1995) decry this scarcity of information about how effective school choice programs have been, and allude to the fact that sweeping legislation has been passed in some states with little planning, and policy decisions made more on faith than on fact. Given the controversy that continues to surround the choice issue, there is a need to further study the impact of choice programs before implementation.

Recommendation 2. Open dialogue between the New Jersey Department of Education and New Jersey's superintendents and principals should be established. Numerous superintendents and principals responded to the NJPISCPEI with comments that expressed resentment and distrust toward the state. It is extremely unfortunate when superintendents and principals harbor such feelings; perhaps an open dialogue would assuage this distrust and help promote a better working relationship between these constituencies.

It is generally assumed that those in the "front lines" of education, teachers, principals, and superintendents, can provide a great deal of insight into school related issues. In a state with 573 chief school administrators and countless

principals, a wealth of knowledge, expertise, and experience is going untapped since open dialogue does not exist between these parties and the state.

It is also interesting to note that participatory management is lauded in schools and districts. However, the proposed interdistrict choice program was mandated by the state with little or no input from those who will ultimately implement the choice program. Creedon (1992) argues that this type of "autocratic, bureaucratic, command, control, comply" managerial style is not nearly as effective as participatory management and shared decision making.

Recommendation 3. Steps should continue to be taken to improve all of America's schools. A variety of school reforms have surfaced since the release of national reports such as A Nation at Risk (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983), which suggested that our schools had lost their competitive edge and were in trouble. Whether or not choice is implemented, reforms should continue.

The Carnegie Foundation's (1992) report suggests that educators on both sides of the choice debate concentrate not so much on school location, but on student learning. They question why so many schools fail to deliver, and why so many students fail to learn. It is noted that the harsh reality is that in many communities, the family is far more imperiled than the schools, and teachers are being asked to do what parents have failed to accomplish. Our nation's public schools are being called upon to stop drugs, reduce teenage pregnancy, feed students, and eliminate gang violence while still meeting academic standards. They write that the time has come to acknowledge the relationship between the home and all of the institutions that influence children's lives, and recommend improving all public schools in order to provide a quality education for every child.

Hlebowitsh (1995), in noting the importance of linking schools to the neighborhood, recommends reaffirming the neighborhood school tradition by making every school one worth choosing.

School choice is seen by many as the reform needed to best educate our students and improve our schools. Carr (1991), however, while noting that all schools should be improved, writes, "The problems of American schools stem in large part from causes deep in the national experience: urban blight, drugs, and erosion of the family..." and notes that schools have been asked to take over roles formerly played by the family, churches, and other agencies as well. He notes that it would be tragic if the choice debate were to shift attention away from these pathologies that harm kids, weaken schools and tear at the very fabric of the nation.

Recommendation 4. Based on the qualitative comments of respondents who noted that equitable funding has been a persistent problem in the Garden State, it is recommended that work continue towards the development of an equitable statewide funding formula not solely based on property taxes.

Burke (1991) notes that local funding of education and disparities in local wealth have resulted in limited access to quality programs. He adds that education is a demand service—parents decide what district offers the level of education they want, and then, if they can afford it, buy a home there. This naturally results in inequities in one's ability to attain access to a quality education.

Cohn and Geske (1990) remind us that equity involves a redistribution of resources or costs to achieve our philosophical and ethical standards of fairness. Most would agree that New Jersey does not provide its students a "level playing field" since per-pupil spending varies so greatly, from a high of

\$14,186 in Alpine, to \$5,356 in Prospect Park (New Jersey Department of Education, 1999). Until fiscal disparities from district to district can be resolved, choice will widen the gap between the privileged and the disadvantaged, and the concept of equity and opportunity will be just so much talk.

Recommendation 5. Districts should consider the implementation of intradistrict school choice. Tyack (1992) and the Carnegie Foundation (1992) suggest that district wide choice can help revitalize schools, empower teachers and principals, and stimulate parents to consider which program is best suited for their children, while Wells (1995) and Young and Clinchy (1992) advocate controlled or intradistrict school choice as holding the most promise for promoting accountability, equity, and diversity. Young and Clinchy further suggest that intradistrict choice plans are more equitable and more likely to increase educational opportunities for minorities and the disadvantaged than interdistrict plans, since they offer minority and low-income students an education previously reserved for suburban white and middle class youngsters. They add that public school choice holds the key to improving public education in America.

Districts like Montclair and East Orange have demonstrated that intradistrict choice can be extremely effective. Intradistrict choice plans are less complicated than statewide programs since no transfer of students or funds occurs. Moreover, funding levels from school to school in intradistrict programs are more equitable than in most statewide programs (Tyack, 1992, Wells, 1991). While busing costs may increase with intradistrict choice programs as they did in Montclair (American Federation of Teachers, 1995; Carnegie Foundation, 1992), the logistics involved in intradistrict transportation are not as involved as in interdistrict programs.

Recommendation 6. No statewide choice program should be established or implemented without certain essential requirements. Choice is an unrealistic proposal when critical components such as transportation and adequate sources of information are not available (Carnegie Foundation, 1992; Feeney, 1994).

Every choice program requires a parent information system that describes the choices available and how selections should be made. Henig (1995) and Fuller (1996) note that choice programs do not operate well in the absence of sufficient information about available options, and suggest that when information is not equally available, school choice exacerbates inequalities in educational opportunity. Bridge and Blackman (1978) and Schiller (1995) suggest the implementation of parent centers to provide disadvantaged families with data necessary to make better informed choices, and Glenn (1993) argues that a sound system of choice includes effective outreach and individual counseling, procedures to assure equal access, and measures to assure that there are real educational choices available.

Martinez et al. (1995) write that we cannot have school choice without making arrangements for students to get to their chosen school since this would discriminate against the poor and is prohibitively inconvenient. If schools do agree to transport, however, costs will certainly escalate. Lee (1993) notes that without transportation policies, choice will be neither equitable nor effective. Martinez et al. (1995) add that any choice program should pay transportation and information costs in order to be equitable.

"Level playing field" means fairness, and fairness means a reduction in the disparities between wealthy and needy districts and students. To ensure fairness, transportation for students, accessible, reliable information for parents

and students about the plan itself and about the quality of individual schools and their programs must be provided.

Suggestions for Future Research

The State of New Jersey notes that its purpose in providing an interdistrict school choice plan is to provide greater choice to parents and students in selecting a school that best meets the needs of the student and thus improves educational opportunities for all of New Jersey's citizens. It hopes that healthy competition between districts will increase educational quality. With this goal in mind, areas for further research should include the following:

1. A study of the perceptions of equity regarding the implementation of school choice to include any or all of the following constituencies: Parents, teachers, school board members, and students in order to determine the feasibility of the interdistrict school choice program.
2. A study to determine the perceived increase or decrease in educational opportunities in New Jersey as a result of the implementation of interdistrict school choice.
3. A study to determine the results of the implemented interdistrict choice program to include test scores, perceptions of equity on the part of both participants and those left behind, and the effects on schools and students left behind.
4. A study to determine if the implementation of choice has resulted in an increase in bureaucratic and educational costs.
5. A study to determine if the interdistrict school choice plan has resulted in an increase in racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic segregation.
6. A study to determine who exercises choice in New Jersey. Are school

choice selections based on convenience and made along racial, socioeconomic, or ethnic lines, or has parental choice been based on the academic effectiveness of the chosen school?

7. A study to determine whether interdistrict or intradistrict school choice would ultimately better serve New Jersey's youngsters.

Will the implementation of choice unleash market forces and competition that will help all schools improve (Chubb & Moe, 1990; Nathan, 1987), or will choice result in negative competition, enabling some schools to improve while others become much worse (Moore & Davenport, 1990)? Will it open a rich array of educational opportunities to all students and give less affluent families opportunities for learning that are now available mainly to the privileged (Alexander, 1993; Dupont, 1994), or will it result in further inequities (Fuller, 1996; Lee et al., 1994; Lutz, 1996; Martinez et al., 1995)? Is choice, in fact, the American way, the "essence of democracy" (Lewis, 1995), and a fundamental right (Randall, 1991), or, as suggested by Guy (1992), is the term equity more applicable to the common school than it is to choice programs?

Martinez et al. (1995) respond to Rassel and Rothstein's (1993) question about school choice, "Does it promote equality of opportunity?" by noting that choice programs can increase or decrease equality of educational opportunity depending on program design. We need to make certain that the design of any program to be implemented in New Jersey ensures equity as well as educational quality.

It is important to point out that despite the results of the New Jersey Proposed Interdistrict School Choice Perception of Equity Inventory and the results of this study, there are numerous staunch proponents of interdistrict school choice among New Jersey's chief school administrators and principals.

Though they constitute a small percentage of the state's administrators, they stand firm in their belief that choice will prove to be an effective reform technique and what is best for students and society alike.

Research has demonstrated that there are districts where choice truly has made a difference. Montclair and East Orange are examples of districts in which intradistrict school choice is considered to be working effectively. On the other hand, reports concerning the negative impact of statewide choice programs on impoverished districts such as Brockton and Gloucester, Massachusetts, as well as tiny, rural ones like Motley, Minnesota, cannot be ignored. These reports continue to raise fears that choice plans will cause schools in some districts to improve, while others become much worse (Moore & Davenport, 1990).

For believers in educational equity, any policy whose result, intended or unintended, is to increase social stratification in education is unwise and should be seriously questioned, whatever its positive results for some people. Lee, Croniger, and Smith (1994) argue that parental choice of schools is a policy that exacerbates the social and economic differences among our citizens. The results of this study suggest that New Jersey's superintendents and principals concur.

Choice may one day prove to be the "essence of democracy" (Lewis, 1995) and what is best for our democratic society (Alexander, 1993). Until such time, we must tread slowly and deliberately to ensure that New Jersey's public schools provide equity and educational quality for all.

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Appendix A

**New Jersey Proposed Interdistrict School Choice Perception of Equity
Inventory**

Directions: Circle the response that most closely indicates your opinion. A response of five means that you strongly agree with the statement; a response of one means that you strongly disagree, while other responses indicate a more neutral opinion. Please make certain to circle one response option for each item and be sure to answer all items on the form. This form is anonymous; do not sign your name.

Strongly Agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly Disagree

1) Parents should have the right to choose the schools their children will attend.

5 4 3 2 1

2) Interdistrict school choice would negatively impact my school(s).

5 4 3 2 1

3) I support the concept of interdistrict school choice.

5 4 3 2 1

4) I support interdistrict school choice in the State of New Jersey.

5 4 3 2 1

5) Interdistrict school choice will result in inequities in the delivery of education to students.

5 4 3 2 1

6) School choice will exacerbate differences between rich and poor students in the State of New Jersey.

5 4 3 2 1

7) Interdistrict school choice will exacerbate differences between choosing and non-choosing families.

5 4 3 2 1

8) Interdistrict school choice will result in inequalities among students along racial lines.

5 4 3 2 1

9) Interdistrict school choice will be of benefit to students in the district in which I work.

5 4 3 2 1

10) Interdistrict school choice would exacerbate inequities among school districts.

5 4 3 2 1

11) Interdistrict school choice will favor those already financially advantaged.

5 4 3 2 1

12) Disadvantaged students will benefit as a result of school choice in NJ.

5 4 3 2 1

13) Proposed interdistrict school choice will increase socioeconomic segregation of students in NJ.

5 4 3 2 1

14) Interdistrict school choice will result in inequalities in educational opportunities for students in NJ.

5 4 3 2 1

15) Interdistrict school choice will result in increased racial and ethnic segregation in New Jersey's schools.

5 4 3 2 1

16) Interdistrict school choice would provide improved educational opportunity for all students.

5 4 3 2 1

17) Interdistrict school choice would provide all students opportunities for learning that are now available mainly to the privileged.

5 4 3 2 1

18) School choice would create competition that would help all schools improve.

5 4 3 2 1

19) Less affluent parents will be disadvantaged by interdistrict school choice in NJ.

5 4 3 2 1

20) Parents with less education will be disadvantaged by interdistrict school choice in NJ.

5 4 3 2 1

Please provide the following information. Remember that all information is anonymous.

A) Age: _____ years.

B) Sex: ___Male ___Female

C) Number of years in administration: _____

D) Administrative Level: ___Elem ___Mid ___Secondary

E) Enrollment in my school district _____ is rising _____ is falling _____ has remained constant.

Please feel free to include any comments you may have on the implementation of interdistrict school choice in New Jersey on this page. Thank you.

Appendix B

John R. Dunay
719 John Street
Secaucus, New Jersey, 07094

TO: CHIEF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS
FROM: JOHN R. DUNAY
RE: DOCTORAL DISSERTATION
DATE: FEBRUARY, 1999

I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Administration and Supervision at Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey, and am employed by the Haledon Board of Education, Haledon, New Jersey, in the capacity of Principal.

My dissertation topic is an investigation into the perceptions of chief school administrators and principals regarding the issue of equity concerning the proposed interdistrict school choice program in New Jersey among District Factor Groups. In order to gather the data necessary to complete this study, I have enclosed a copy of the New Jersey Proposed Interdistrict School Choice Perception of Equity Inventory (NJPISCPEI) for you to fill out. I would very much appreciate your completing this survey and returning it to me in the stamped, self-addressed envelope provided.

In order to ensure the anonymity of participants, no names will be used in the study and no answer will be attributable to an individual or school district. Your participation in this study is, of course, entirely voluntary, and you may choose to withdraw at any time. However, please note that I consider your participation to be of the utmost importance in light of the changes proposed by the New Jersey State Department of Education. The return of a completed survey constitutes consent to participate.

Your assistance in expediting the return of this survey is greatly appreciated.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at work (973) 790-9000 Ext. 22, or at home (201) 348-1828 should any questions arise. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Appendix C

John R. Dunay
719 John Street
Secaucus, New Jersey, 07094

TO: PRINCIPALS
FROM: JOHN R. DUNAY
RE: DOCTORAL DISSERTATION
DATE: FEBRUARY, 1999

I am a doctoral candidate in the Department of Educational Administration and Supervision at Seton Hall University, South Orange, New Jersey, and am employed by the Haledon Board of Education, Haledon, New Jersey, in the capacity of Principal.

My dissertation topic is an investigation into the perceptions of chief school administrators and principals regarding the issue of equity concerning the proposed interdistrict school choice program in New Jersey among District Factor Groups. In order to gather the data necessary to complete this study, I have enclosed a copy of the New Jersey Proposed Interdistrict School Choice Perception of Equity Inventory (NJPISCPEI) for you to fill out. I would very much appreciate your completing this survey and returning it to me in the stamped, self-addressed envelope provided.

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Please do not hesitate to contact me at work (973) 790-9000 Ext. 22, or at home (201) 348-1828 should any questions arise. Thank you in advance for your time and consideration.

Appendix D

Parents Should Have the Right to Choose the School(s) Their Children Will Attend. (Item 1)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	36	13.1	13.3	13.3%
Agree	70	25.5	25.8	39.1%
Neutral	50	18.2	18.5	57.6%
Disagree	69	25.1	25.5	83.1%
Strongly Disagree	46	16.7	17.0	100%

Interdistrict School Choice Would Negatively Impact My School (Item 2)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	69	25.1	25.7	25.7%
Agree	51	18.5	19.0	44.7%
Neutral	50	18.2	18.6	63.3%
Disagree	67	24.4	24.9	88.2%
Strongly Disagree	32	11.6	11.9	100%

I Support the Concept of Interdistrict School Choice (Item 3)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	16	5.8	5.8	5.8%
Agree	55	20.0	20.1	25.9%
Neutral	41	14.9	15.0	40.9%
Disagree	82	29.8	29.9	70.8%
Strongly Disagree	80	29.1	29.2	100%

I Support Interdistrict School Choice in the State of New Jersey (Item 4)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	15	5.5	5.5	5.5%
Agree	47	17.1	17.1	22.6%
Neutral	41	14.9	14.9	37.5%
Disagree	83	30.2	30.2	67.7%
Strongly Disagree	89	32.4	32.4	100%

Interdistrict Choice Will Result in Inequities in the Delivery of Instruction (Item 5)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	12	4.4	4.4	4.4%
Agree	41	14.9	15.0	19.3%
Neutral	36	13.1	13.1	32.5%
Disagree	88	32.0	32.1	64.6%
Strongly Disagree	97	35.3	35.4	100%

School Choice Will Exacerbate Differences Between Rich and Poor Students (Item 6)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	113	41.1	41.1	41.1%
Agree	96	34.9	34.9	76.0%
Neutral	27	9.8	9.8	85.8%
Disagree	29	10.5	10.5	96.4%
Strongly Disagree	10	3.6	3.6	100%

Interdistrict School Choice Will Exacerbate Differences Between Choosing and Non-choosing Families (Item 7)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	82	29.8	30.0	30.0%
Agree	100	36.4	36.6	66.6%
Neutral	59	21.5	21.6	88.2%
Disagree	24	8.7	8.8	97.0%
Strongly Disagree	8	2.9	2.9	100%

School Choice Will Exacerbate Inequities Along Racial Lines (Item 8)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	86	31.3	31.3	31.3%
Agree	102	37.1	37.1	68.4%
Neutral	36	13.1	13.1	81.5%
Disagree	45	16.4	16.4	97.9%
Strongly Disagree	6	2.2	2.2	100%

Interdistrict Choice Would Benefit Students in the District in Which I Work

(Item 9)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	10	3.6	3.7	3.7%
Agree	30	10.9	11.1	14.8%
Neutral	64	23.3	23.7	38.5%
Disagree	88	32.0	32.6	71.1%
Strongly Disagree	78	28.4	28.9	100%

Interdistrict Choice Will Exacerbate Inequalities Among School Districts

(Item 10)

	Freq	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	91	33.1	33.3	33.3%
Agree	102	37.1	37.4	61.8%
Neutral	38	13.8	13.9	70.7%
Disagree	33	12.0	12.1	81.3%
Strongly Disagree	9	3.3	3.3	100%

Interdistrict Choice Will Favor Those Already Financially Advantaged (Item 11)

	Freq	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	70	25.5	25.5	25.5%
Agree	89	32.4	32.4	57.9%
Neutral	49	17.8	17.8	75.7%
Disagree	59	21.5	21.5	97.2%
Strongly Disagree	8	2.9	2.9	100%

Disadvantaged Students Will Benefit as a Result of School Choice in NJ

(Item 12)

	Freq	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	13	4.7	4.7	4.7%
Agree	61	22.2	22.3	27.0%
Neutral	64	23.3	23.4	50.4%
Disagree	94	34.2	34.3	84.7%
Strongly Disagree	42	15.3	15.3	100%

Interdistrict Choice Will Increase Socioeconomic Segregation of Students

(Item 13)

	Freq	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	65	23.6	23.6	23.6%
Agree	107	38.9	62.5	62.5%
Neutral	48	17.5	17.5	80.0%
Disagree	46	16.7	16.7	96.7%
Strongly Disagree	9	3.3	3.3	100%

Choice Will Result in Inequities in Educational Opportunities in NJ (Item 14)

	Freq	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	65	23.6	23.9	23.9%
Agree	103	37.5	37.9	61.8%
Neutral	52	18.9	19.1	80.9%
Disagree	46	16.7	16.9	97.8%
Strongly Disagree	6	2.2	2.2	100%

Interdistrict Choice Will Result in Increased Racial and Ethnic Segregation

(Item 15)

	Freq	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	70	25.5	25.7	25.7%
Agree	102	37.1	37.5	63.2%
Neutral	46	16.7	16.9	80.1%
Disagree	50	18.2	18.4	98.5%
Strongly Disagree	4	1.5	1.5	100%

Interdistrict School Choice Would Provide Improved Educational Opportunities for All Students (Item 16)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	11	4.0	4.0	4.0%
Agree	42	15.3	15.3	19.3%
Neutral	46	16.7	16.8	36.1%
Disagree	112	40.7	40.9	77.0%
Strongly Disagree	63	22.9	23.0	100%

Interdistrict School Choice Would Provide All Students Opportunities for
Learning That Are Now Available Mainly to the Privileged (Item 17)

	Frequency	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	7	2.5	2.6	2.6%
Agree	46	16.7	16.8	19.4%
Neutral	48	17.5	17.5	36.9%
Disagree	118	42.9	43.1	80.0%
Strongly Disagree	55	20.0	20.1	100%

Choice Would Create Competition That Would Help All Schools Improve
(Item 18)

	Freq	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	23	8.4	8.4	8.4%
Agree	51	18.5	18.5	26.9%
Neutral	57	20.7	20.7	47.6%
Disagree	87	31.6	31.6	79.2%
Strongly Disagree	57	20.7	20.7	100%

Less Affluent Parents Will Be Disadvantaged by Interdistrict School Choice(Item 19)

	Freq	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	50	18.2	18.2	18.2%
Agree	86	31.3	31.4	49.6%
Neutral	68	24.7	24.8	74.4%
Disagree	63	22.9	23.0	97.4%
Strongly Disagree	7	2.5	2.6	100%

Parents With Less Education Will Be Disadvantaged by Interdistrict Choice(Item 20)

	Freq	Percent	Valid %	Cumulative
Strongly Agree	49	17.8	17.9	17.9%
Agree	91	33.1	33.2	51.1%
Neutral	62	22.5	22.6	73.7%
Disagree	62	22.5	22.6	96.3%
Strongly Disagree	10	3.6	3.6	100%